



KEIRA KNIGHTLEY WEARS A COCO CRUSH RING AND BRACELETS
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THE

DEC. 30, 2019

NEW YORKER

than the old creeping fear of being outdone by reality comes upon me. Is it possible that all this is old hat, that in fact an overcarpeted escalator in Mr. Getty's house would start a revolution? he was short of cash and lead a sort of thing of a painter with the Stock Exchange. Let me withdraw the card and substitute another in which I have much more confidence.

After Mr. Getty's television appearance and the *Times* advertisement ("any reasonable offer"), surprise came on picking Gilbert White's "Domestic Escalators!" and I believe I should feel that the had not been entirely in vain. "In your mind," my friends would say, "the clamor at last died down, and I have the address of a man?" These are the most delicate taste sweetest on a palate of caviar and big killings on the market.

"Domestic escalators" is not, I ought perhaps to warn gentlemen of fortune, a well-chosen phrase for echo work. It came into my mind at random, and is a shade too iambic for good results. Quick wits, Gilbert White observes after experiment with a Selborne echo (published I read it), succeed best, such a "Tityre, tu patulae recubans..." far more satisfactory answer "slow, heavy, embarrassed" of "Monstrum horrendum, ensanguis..." Millionaires who are rusty may not care to approach the general principle is one of the steps in the road without a dog.

I think we are on to something here. Natural echoes are nothing out of the way and can be met with on the properties of persons of quite modern means. Some of them have remarkable ears. I have read of a castle near the sea has (or had) one reputed to be a port of a pistol sixty feet away. The echo is on a rather high fish. A man who has a dog

only a simple little thing of the kind envisaged by Gilbert White. And I see no reason why it should be. If I had more than a third of Mr. Getty's millions, I should aim at something a little more ambitious in my outlet. On the never be dull after dinner with a lively echo that goes one better than the price of Lombardy. Just let me sit at the *centrum phonicum* on a fine summer evening listening to my cry of "Domestic Escalators!" come back to me sixty-one times, and I believe I should feel that the had not been entirely in vain.

"Domestic escalators" is not, I ought perhaps to warn gentlemen of fortune, a well-chosen phrase for echo work. It came into my mind at random, and is a shade too iambic for good results. Quick wits, Gilbert White observes after experiment with a Selborne echo (published I read it), succeed best, such a "Tityre, tu patulae recubans..." far more satisfactory answer "slow, heavy, embarrassed" of "Monstrum horrendum, ensanguis..." Millionaires who are rusty may not care to approach the general principle is one of the steps in the road without a dog.

from end to end and fail to find a millionaire with both a summer and a winter heliotrope on his estate; in all the world I doubt whether there is a single man who possesses these two embellishments, and a custom-built echo. I am sorry for all I know, may think that a heliotrope is merely a flower and not, as it seems to have been in Gilbert White's day, a construction for promoting science by observing the southwesterly and northwesterly limits of the setting sun. Here, then, is scope for means and imagination, for individuality without ostentation. For observe that the visible apparatus, as White is at pains to state, is by no means expensive. A dog kennel here, a timber framework there, and the thing is done. It is the setting that puts these luxuries beyond the reach of the ordinary man. For your echo you must have two hills of a gentle declivity some few hundred yards apart, with your kennels and barns suitably disposed about them to promote reverberation, and a canal or lake between. But your heliotropes demand a good natural horizon, since no man can observe the extreme westering of the sun if some hillock intervenes. Thus your declivities, as I deduce, must face north and south, leaving a level plain to westward for the heliotropes. A further complication arises in the siting of the mansion itself to command the winter heliotrope. "The erection for the former," Gilbert White well says (referring to the heliotrope, rather than the mansion), "should, if possible, be placed within sight of some window in the common parlour; because men are not so apt to be out of the house as that they can see the sun of the winter. This is certainly a very good reason."



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THE NEW YORKER
CARTOON TAKEOVER
A SEMI-ARCHIVAL ISSUE

DECEMBER 30, 2019

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George Saunders (*Fiction,* p. 56) was first published in the magazine in 1992. His latest book, *"Lincoln in the Bardo,"* won the Man Booker Prize.



Liana Finck (*"Hammurabi's Code of Manners,"* p. 59) is a *New Yorker* cartoonist. Her latest book is *"Excuse Me: Cartoons, Complaints, and Notes to Self."*



Richard Brody (*Annals of Animation,* p. 69), a film critic for the magazine, wrote *"Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard."*



Emma Allen (*Comment,* p. 5) is the magazine's cartoon editor. She also edits humor pieces for newyorker.com.



Jonathan Lethem (*Fiction,* p. 60) teaches creative writing at Pomona College. His latest novel is *"The Feral Detective."*



Veronica Geng (*Shouts & Murmurs,* p. 17) contributed to the magazine for nearly three decades. She died in 1997.



John Updike (*"Lost Art,"* p. 14) contributed to the magazine for more than five decades. He died in 2009.



Emily Flake (“‘Parent’ as a Verb,” p. 19) is the author of “That Was Awkward: The Art and Etiquette of the Awkward Hug.”



R. Sikoryak (*Cover*) is a cartoonist whose works include the graphic novels “Terms and Conditions” and “The Unquotable Trump.”



Dorothy Parker (*Poem*, p. 65) wrote screenplays, short stories, criticism, and poetry. She died in 1967.



Patrick Berry (*Puzzles & Games Dept.*, p. 72) is a *New Yorker* crossword constructor. His crosswords have also appeared in the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.



Ebony Flowers (“Lines,” p. 12) is a writer and a cartoonist. She is the author of “Hot Comb.”



Ian Frazier (*Shouts & Murmurs*, p. 10) most recently published “Hogs Wild: Selected Reporting Pieces” and is working on a book about the Bronx.



Luci Gutiérrez (*Sketchpad*, p. 9), an illustrator based in Barcelona, is the author of “English Is Not Easy: A Visual Guide to the Language.”



Charles Barsotti (*The Back Page*, p. 74) contributed cartoons to the magazine for more than forty years. He died in 2014.



Noah Baumbach (*Shouts & Murmurs*, p. 22) recently wrote and directed the film “Marriage Story.”

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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED

When *The New Yorker* was founded, in 1925, by the square-jawed newspaperman Harold Ross and his wife, the feminist and journalist Jane Grant, it was envisioned as a comic weekly. Since its inaugural installment, it has been packed with amusing drawings. (Issue No. 1 featured a commuter dutifully heeding a sign that read “PLEASE! HELP US KEEP THE ‘L’ AND SUBWAY CLEAN,” by polishing a window with his handkerchief.) Soon, Ross was noting that “everybody talks of *The New Yorker’s* art—that is, its illustrations—and it has been described as the best magazine in the world for someone who cannot read.” And yet here you are, reader, at the very end of this paragraph, proving him wrong!

It is true, though, that the most popular cocktail-party confession that I, the cartoon editor, solemnly receive and usually absolve is that someone “reads” *The New Yorker* only for the cartoons. Or that he or she always reads the cartoons first. (This is just before the penitent pivots to a harangue about the injustice of never having won the caption contest.) Apparently, *The New Yorker* also prints a bunch of bumper facts about corruption and oppression and imminent eco-apocalypse, but this week it just so happens that all the people in charge of that sort of thing have gone away for the holidays.

Yes, you read that correctly. (Look at you—still bothering with all these words!) Every last one of the serious adult types at this publication is off mulling some

wine, trimming a tree, roasting a chestnut, taking in a matinee of “*Little Women*,” lighting a candle, putting out a candle-related fire, or catching up on back issues of verbose periodicals. And who happened to be napping under a desk when the office was being securely locked up for the winter break? You guessed it—the Cartoon Department.

Finding ourselves trapped in here, *sans* H.V.A.C. but *avec* the boss’s filing-cabinet Scotch (the good stuff), we banged on the doors and called for help, then collapsed onto the floor, weeping and rending our clothes. Later, we watched “*Risky Business*,” to get inspiration for cat’s-away high jinks, and skated around the Fact-Checking Department in our socks. Finally, we decided to give the cocktail-party people what they deserve: a cartoon-takeover issue.

To that end, we’ve thumbed through

the archives, rummaged around in editors’ waste bins, and peered into the space behind my desk where important things tend to fall, and we’ve pasted together something resembling a magazine. It includes such treasures as a 1997 piece by John Updike on his youthful aspirations to be a gag cartoonist (judge for yourselves); cartoon-inflected fiction and poetry; cartoons about cartooning; musings on early animation; and comics by Liana Finck, Emily Flake, Ebony Flowers, and Emma Hunsinger. Ever wanted to know what Larry David’s or Mindy Kaling’s or Terry Gross’s or Ta-Nehisi Coates’s favorite cartoon is? We’ve got you covered. Been craving a Profile of that patron saint of neurotic geniuses, Roz Chast? Read on. There’s some old stuff and some new stuff, all aimed at keeping you smiling into the New Year, which we have on good authority will be much funnier than its predecessor.

Nine and a half decades ago, Ross had this to say about the publication he was planning: “It will hate bunk.” Of late, bunk has irrefutably been on the rise; the antidote, now as then, is humor. Besides, who couldn’t use a laugh break from this whiplash-inducing carnival ride of a news cycle?

So, as you settle in for fireside holiday rants from your bunky uncle, we hope you enjoy this issue. (Tip: in its printed form, it can be rolled up and used as a low-impact weapon.) The ratio of pictures to words should satisfy even the most literacy-averse. Oh, and please send a locksmith, or at least a pizza.

—Emma Allen



FRAGMENTS FOUND IN TRANSLATION



Miglė Anušauskaitė, a heavily tattooed, thirty-one-year-old Lithuanian cartoonist, is not Jewish. But in 2015, after winning an award for a comic book she created, she used her prize money to start studying languages, including Hebrew. Her Hebrew teacher worked at the Lithuanian national library's Judaica Research Center, and asked her if she wanted a job. "I still don't know why," Anušauskaitė said. "But I was interested." At her new job, she encountered Yiddish. She decided to learn that, too.

Anušauskaitė lives in Vilnius, which has been nicknamed the "Jerusalem of the North." It was the original home of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO), an organization dedicated to the preservation of Jewish culture. In 1939, YIVO announced a contest for the "best Jewish youth autobiography," open to young men and women between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. First prize was a hundred and fifty *zlotys*, or about thirty dollars. YIVO clarified that the exercise was not technically a writing contest. Its aims were sociological: "We want to become fully aware of the life of the Jewish youth in these difficult days."

YIVO had planned to announce the winners on September 1, 1939, but that day Germany invaded Poland, starting the Second World War. Two years later, the Nazis occupied Vilnius, and YIVO's library—one of the most extensive collec-

tions of Yiddish and Hebrew documents in the world—became a clear target. A group of Jews managed to smuggle out thousands of texts. One trove was hidden in the basement of a local church; in 1988, two hundred and thirty thousand pages were discovered there, and sent to YIVO's relocated headquarters, in Manhattan, to be catalogued and conserved. In 2017, more papers were found in the church basement, including dozens of youth autobiographies written for YIVO—entries for the contest that was interrupted in 1939, as well as for earlier contests.

Now Anušauskaitė is translating these autobiographies. "The documents are amazing," she said. "There's an autobiography from a girl—she met this guy who has beautiful eyes, and they're kissing, but she says the relationship won't go anywhere. Then this sentence: 'Love between us can never be, because he's Polish. And, also, he's married.'"

Lately she's been working through a boy's memoir from 1932. "The second rabbi who taught me was called Noyakh," she translated. "He had a manner of chewing so long when eating that food would start dripping from his mouth. He made a strange impression on me. Without realizing, I started to imitate him. When my family noticed this, they asked me to stop."

Anušauskaitė has hit a few snags. "The documents are so dusty," she said. "You have to wash your hands after." They can also be difficult to read because of messy handwriting and poor spelling. "Many of the writers didn't know standard Yiddish orthography, so they just wrote the words the way they heard them," she explained. "How do you search for that in a dictionary?"

The main problem, though, is that

huge chunks of the autobiographies are missing. "Sometimes you just have a random page," she said. "For some of them, you have a notebook that says 'The Second Part of My Autobiography.'" Thinking that the missing pages might be at YIVO, she travelled to New York to find out. (She also enrolled in some intermediate Yiddish classes there.)

Anušauskaitė arrived at YIVO, near Union Square, one afternoon, carrying a folder full of scans. After making it through the T.S.A.-level security, she was met by Jessica Podhorcer, a YIVO archivist, who took her up to the third floor and showed her around what looked like a Jewish Dunder Mifflin. Stacked cardboard boxes and knotted extension cords were scattered around. Taped to the wall was a page of instructions labelled "Hebrew Keyboard layout for Windows PC." Podhorcer had brought out archival boxes filled with the autobiography entries that had pages missing. "Let's see what we can match," she said.

Both women are so familiar with the documents that they were able to identify certain entries by handwriting, page size, and even ink color. "I recognize that," Anušauskaitė said, pointing at a yellowed piece of paper.

"We only have the one page here," Podhorcer said. Anušauskaitė told her that there was a whole notebook in Vilnius by the same writer.

"What do you know about them?" Podhorcer asked.

"It's a girl," Anušauskaitė said. "She talks about her female friends. She's so good at remembering detail. Every single line of dialogue."

"Some people submitted more than a thousand pages," Podhorcer said. "It's driving me nuts. They're so scattered."



Anušauskaitė held up one of the scans she'd brought from Vilnius. "Do you have this person? Who writes in green ink in big notebooks?"

"I don't think so."

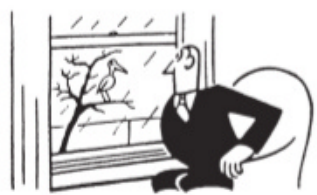
Podhorcer and Anušauskaitė were excited to find another match: they both had a couple of pages from an autobiography that had been written in an especially fine hand. But then they noticed that their respective pages, despite containing different text, had the same page numbers. Evidently, the writer had participated in more than one contest.

A few more matches were made. Anušauskaitė had a notebook from someone who wrote about "betrayal," and about strangers looking down on him, and she matched it to a second notebook at YIVO, in which he wrote that he had "finally met some honest people" after joining a socialist organization.

Anušauskaitė turned her visit to New York into a series of comic strips—about overheard supermarket conversations, comments on the street, and the perils of learning Yiddish grammar. Would she ever consider illustrating the autobiographies? "I'm not sure," she said. "The material itself is already so interesting. It doesn't need it."

—Tyler Foggatt

LOST AND FOUND DEPT. FLEW THE COOP



The squawking started in the summer. By late fall, it would become the soundtrack to a tale of urban dogooding gone awry. One morning in July, Kate Boicourt was frying plantains in her apartment in Ditmas Park when a peculiar sound caught her ear. She looked out her fifth-story window and saw a snowy-white bird perched on her fire escape—ten inches tall, with a pink blush around its beak and an impish Mohawk. The bird peered at Boicourt with a hungry stare. "It was like he was saying, 'I'm here in time for breakfast,'" Boicourt recalled the other day.

Boicourt, who is thirty-five and works for the nonprofit Waterfront Alliance,

is used to seeing pigeons and seagulls in her leafy neighborhood, but this specimen was new. The bird began appearing every day, and she started feeding it fruit and nuts. She turned to the Ditmas Park Facebook group, hoping to locate the bird's owner, and saw that neighbors had been filing field reports about the bird. Information trickled in slowly: the bird was known in the neighborhood, because its owners used to put its cage on the porch of their Victorian house from time to time. It was a Goffin's cockatoo. It was a he. His name was Clyde. Clyde had a mate named Bonnie, who had also flown the coop. The owners, Ethan Clarke, who is a stonemason, and his wife, Nicole, are not on Facebook, so they didn't see any of the updates about their bird. Occasionally, neighbors would tell them that Clyde had been spotted, and the Clarkes would go searching for him, without success. They did not feel comfortable knocking on the doors of strangers in the apartment buildings that Clyde frequented.

Clyde's habit was to arrive at Boicourt's window between 5 and 6 A.M., and, one day, as she put his breakfast on her fire escape, she saw that her downstairs neighbor, Sheila Kim, had left food out, too. So had Candace DeBartolo, on three, and Anja Riebensahm, on two. The women began comparing notes on Clyde, sharing his likes (chili peppers) and dislikes (strawberries). "He seemed like the perfect pet," Boicourt said. "We were enamored with his freedom."

As the weather turned chilly, delight turned to concern. But the four neighbors continued trouble-shooting without tracking down the Clarkes. "We're going to have a popsicle with feathers," DeBartolo said. After a cold night, she ordered a fly-fishing net. Clyde was too fast for her. DeBartolo contacted someone at the Long Island Parrot Society, who recommended limiting Clyde's food source to one person, and gradually moving the food farther inside. DeBartolo and Kim both have cats, and Riebensahm already had a bird, so the task fell to Boicourt.

The amateur bird-catchers scoured the Internet. They watched a YouTube video called "Hack Life: Creative Best Bird Trap Make from Big Cardboard Box that Work 100%," in which a boy

recommended using rubber bands to fashion a spring-loaded pigeon snare. DeBartolo, a professional musician, noticed that Clyde came to the window when she practiced the flute part for Celine Dion's "Because You Loved Me," but flew away when she pulled out her saxophone.

In November, with temperatures dipping into the forties, the cockatoo committee called Birdcamp, an avian specialty store in midtown, which put them in touch with Steve Carpenter, the owner of a female Goffin's cockatoo named Gracie. The next day, Carpenter, a burly I.T. consultant, arrived at Boicourt's apartment, with Gracie. She had a blue tether fastened around



Clyde the cockatoo

her chest, and Carpenter gently placed her on the fire escape.

Clyde arrived immediately. If everything had gone according to plan, Gracie would have hopped back inside and enticed Clyde to follow her. The two birds touched beaks and squawked amiably at each other for a few hours, but eventually Clyde flew off, and Carpenter took Gracie home.

The rescuers were running out of options. Boicourt dreamed that she found Clyde dead on the fire escape. Her boyfriend ordered a chicken-pen warmer—a kind of miniature space heater—which she planned to put outside the window. On the morning of November 8th, Boicourt rose early, with a quiet resolve. Clyde was on the fire escape. As he ambled back and forth,

preening, Boicourt grabbed a purple bath towel. She threw it over the bird and pulled him into her apartment. “I felt like a ninja,” she said. The creature bit her, hard, on the pinkie.

Boicourt thrust Clyde into a borrowed birdcage and texted her neighbors. “I caught him,” she wrote. “He bit the shit out of me.” Kim and DeBartolo raced upstairs to find droplets of blood on the floor.

During the months of Clyde-watching, the neighbors had come to the conclusion that the Clarkes didn’t care about getting their bird back. This was not the case. But Boicourt and the others took a “finders keepers” stance. Instead of contacting the Clarkes, the group called Glenn Sorino, a bird expert whom the *Times* once called the “Pied Piper of Parrots.” He matched Clyde with a family of bird aficionados, the Molinas, on Long Island. They drove to pick up Clyde in Brooklyn, where a small party of neighbors gathered to say goodbye. “Maybe we can get him back for the summer,” DeBartolo said.

He might be back even sooner. Not long ago, the Clarkes, who have been worried for months, finally heard through the grapevine about Clyde’s rescue, and they now hope to bring him home. “I prayed Clyde would return safe,” Nicole Clarke said. “I saw a hawk plucking feathers off a pigeon recently.”

—Katia Bachko

CHICAGO POSTCARD EVERYTHING WABI-SABI



A young couple was browsing at Judy Maxwell Home, a gift shop on Chicago’s North Side, when they noticed a middle-aged, red-haired woman perched on a stool, palpating the sternum of a life-size red Power Ranger. The couple didn’t recognize her, but it was the store’s owner, the actress Joan Cusack. She had on a beige apron over a blue-flowered dress. On the back of the apron, she’d sewn a tiny vintage Barbie outfit.

“He’s kind of gone through some hard times,” Cusack said, addressing the

shopping couple, as she pressed down on the Power Ranger’s chest. A strangled pleasantry emitted from a speaker inside him. “Very encouraging,” she said, stepping off the stool.

The couple left without buying anything, but Cusack considered the transaction a success. She seems concerned with more than just selling things: when she opened the shop, in 2011, she hadn’t yet put price tags on the merchandise.

“My kids were young, and I didn’t really want to take acting work, because I always had to go away,” she said. “I was trying to think of something to do, because I’m not really a big cooking person.” Raised outside Chicago, Cusack never felt drawn to Los Angeles. She was cast in the Showtime series “Shameless,” which was shot in Chicago, playing a randy agoraphobic named Sheila, and set up shop in Old Town. She’s moved the shop down the street since then, to what was formerly the Bijou, a gay-porn theatre. Her brother John rents the building’s second floor, using it as an art studio.

In the shop’s back room, Cusack took a seat beneath a crumbling portrait of a woman in a blue dress. “Virginia Woolf says you have to have a room of your own,” she said. “I also think, if you’re a woman now, it’s so fun to have a shop of your own. You hone your instincts in the world, versus at home. This is a little lab of my own instincts about being in the world.”

She gestured at the opposite wall, where an enormous, water-damaged painted backdrop of Venice hung behind a puppet theatre housing a vigorously loved Teddy bear and two miniature squirrels—one plastic and cute, one wrought iron and terrifying.

Cusack admires the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*—a reverence for the imperfect. It is the shop’s unifying principle, and perhaps Cusack’s as well. (Hollywood, she said, can be “everything not *wabi-sabi*.”) A crevice in a wood shelf had been filled in with a triangle of white doily and clear tape—a bootleg approximation of the Japanese art of *kintsugi*, whereby cracks in pottery are repaired with seams of gold. On one wall, oversized Scrabble tiles spelled out “CHICAGO,” except that the “A” had been carefully drawn on an

index card in Sharpie. “We kind of had a run on Scrabble tiles,” Cusack said. “Vowels. People like vowels.”

When Cusack isn’t manning the store, it is run by Danny Roenna, whom she met three years ago, when he was working as a pharmacy technician at CVS. Roenna and Cusack spend their days drinking cherry-flavored coffee and doing bits in loud mid-Atlantic accents.

Judy Maxwell Home carries miniature fishing rods that are actually lighters, rubber horse hooves to be worn over the hands, and rolls of toilet paper bearing the President’s face. Among the gag gifts are also some unironically beautiful things; Cusack doesn’t distinguish between the two. One shopper bought six coasters printed with famous mug shots, a “public toilet survival kit,” a book of Cy Twombly paintings, and a pack of Dubble Bubble.

Cusack is coy about publicizing her ownership. Judy Maxwell is the name of the character Barbra Streisand plays in “What’s Up, Doc?”—“Joan Cusack’s favorite movie,” the shop’s Web site proclaims. Many visitors wander in after seeing a duct-taped sign out front, on which Cusack has written, in Sharpie, “Whats in that store.”

When patrons recognize her, Cusack enjoys being able to redirect their interest to something more tactile and, she feels, more personal, such as her hand-bound, hand-markered book about Tootsie Rolls. “Being a celebrity actress isn’t that fun, over and over,” she said. “It’s just not that great of a world, except for being exposed to cool sets and talented, interesting people. But this is so fun.”

“She looks like an actress,” an older man in a Cubs hat told Roenna, as he purchased a pack of Chicago Bears playing cards. “I wish I could remember the lady’s name.”

“Katharine Hepburn,” Roenna suggested.

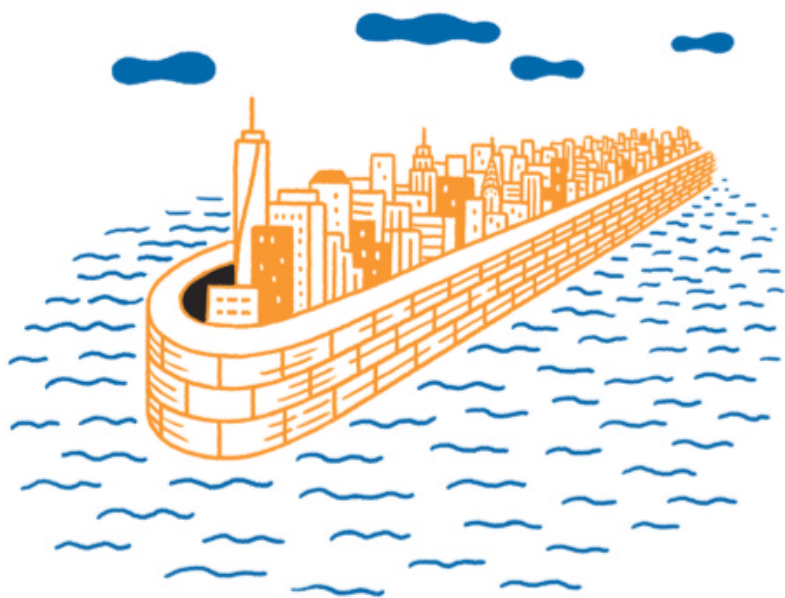
“The calla lilies are in bloom again. Such a sweet flower,” Cusack said, in a Hepburn drawl. The man looked stumped. “It is me. Joan Cusack,” she said. “This is my little store.” She obliged the man with a photo, and he stood at the register for a long time, typing on his phone with one finger. “What’s your name again?” he asked.

“J-O-A-N—”

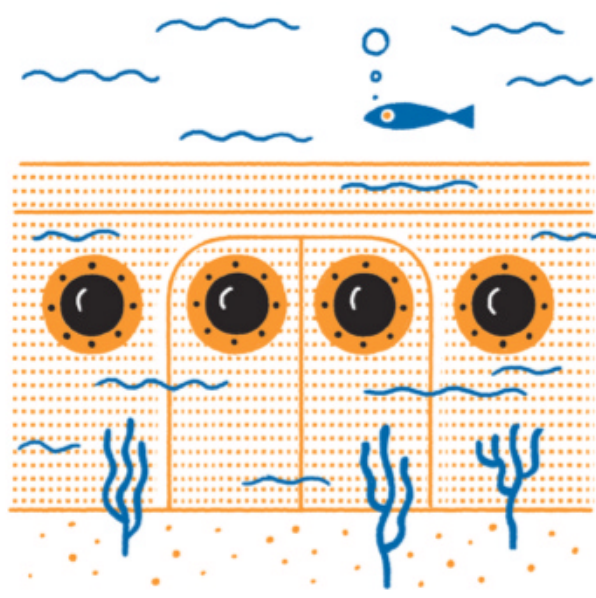
—Lauren Larson

SKETCHPAD
FANTASY ISLAND, SUBWAY EDITION

In the years since Hurricane Sandy damaged much of the subway system, the city has committed to devising solutions to help stem the rising tides caused by global warming—including a tampon-like device called a “tunnel plug.” Here, some other ideas:



Can a seawall keep the tracks dry?



“Stand clear of the closing portholes!”



Bring back the El.



Snorkeling while straphanging.



The Moses method, with fans.



COYOTE V. ACME

BY IAN FRAZIER

IN THE UNITED STATES
DISTRICT COURT, SOUTHWESTERN
DISTRICT, TEMPE, ARIZONA
CASE NO. B19294, JUDGE JOAN
KUJAVA, PRESIDING

WILE E. COYOTE, Plaintiff
-v.-
ACME COMPANY, Defendant

Opening Statement of Mr. Harold Schoff, attorney for Mr. Coyote: My client, Mr. Wile E. Coyote, a resident of Arizona and contiguous states, does hereby bring suit for damages against the Acme Company, manufacturer and retail distributor of assorted merchandise, incorporated in Delaware and doing business in every state, district, and territory. Mr. Coyote seeks compensation for personal injuries, loss of business income, and mental suffering caused as a direct result of

the actions and/or gross negligence of said company, under Title 15 of the United States Code, Chapter 47, section 2072, subsection (a), relating to product liability.

Mr. Coyote states that on eighty-five separate occasions he has purchased of the Acme Company (hereinafter, "Defendant"), through that company's mail-order department, certain products which did cause him bodily injury due to defects in manufacture or improper cautionary labelling. Sales slips made out to Mr. Coyote as proof of purchase are at present in the possession of the Court, marked Exhibit A. Such injuries sustained by Mr. Coyote have temporarily restricted his ability to make a living in his profession of predator. Mr. Coyote is self-employed and thus not eligible for Workmen's Compensation.

Mr. Coyote states that on Decem-

ber 13th he received of Defendant via parcel post one Acme Rocket Sled. The intention of Mr. Coyote was to use the Rocket Sled to aid him in pursuit of his prey. Upon receipt of the Rocket Sled Mr. Coyote removed it from its wooden shipping crate and, sighting his prey in the distance, activated the ignition. As Mr. Coyote gripped the handlebars, the Rocket Sled accelerated with such sudden and precipitate force as to stretch Mr. Coyote's forelimbs to a length of fifty feet. Subsequently, the rest of Mr. Coyote's body shot forward with a violent jolt, causing severe strain to his back and neck and placing him unexpectedly astride the Rocket Sled. Disappearing over the horizon at such speed as to leave a diminishing jet trail along its path, the Rocket Sled soon brought Mr. Coyote abreast of his prey. At that moment the animal he was pursuing veered sharply to the right. Mr. Coyote vigorously attempted to follow this maneuver but was unable to, due to poorly designed steering on the Rocket Sled and a faulty or nonexistent braking system. Shortly thereafter, the unchecked progress of the Rocket Sled brought it and Mr. Coyote into collision with the side of a mesa.

Paragraph One of the Report of Attending Physician (Exhibit B), prepared by Dr. Ernest Grosscup, M.D., D.O., details the multiple fractures, contusions, and tissue damage suffered by Mr. Coyote as a result of this collision. Repair of the injuries required a full bandage around the head (excluding the ears), a neck brace, and full or partial casts on all four legs.

Hampered by these injuries, Mr. Coyote was nevertheless obliged to support himself. With this in mind, he purchased of Defendant as an aid to mobility one pair of Acme Rocket Skates. When he attempted to use this product, however, he became involved in an accident remarkably similar to that which occurred with the Rocket Sled. Again, Defendant sold over the counter, without caveat, a product which attached powerful jet engines (in this case, two) to inadequate vehicles, with little or no provision for passenger safety. Encumbered by his heavy casts, Mr. Coyote lost control of the Rocket Skates soon after strapping them on, and collided with a roadside billboard

so violently as to leave a hole in the shape of his full silhouette.

Mr. Coyote states that on occasions too numerous to list in this document he has suffered mishaps with explosives purchased of Defendant: the Acme “Little Giant” Firecracker, the Acme Self-Guided Aerial Bomb, etc. (For a full listing, see the Acme Mail Order Explosives Catalogue and attached deposition, entered in evidence as Exhibit C.) Indeed, it is safe to say that not once has an explosive purchased of Defendant by Mr. Coyote performed in an expected manner. To cite just one example: At the expense of much time and personal effort, Mr. Coyote constructed around the outer rim of a butte a wooden trough beginning at the top of the butte and spiralling downward around it to some few feet above a black X painted on the desert floor. The trough was designed in such a way that a spherical explosive of the type sold by Defendant would roll easily and swiftly down to the point of detonation indicated by the X. Mr. Coyote placed a generous pile of birdseed directly on the X, and then, carrying the spherical Acme Bomb (Catalogue # 78-832), climbed to the top of the butte. Mr. Coyote’s prey, seeing the birdseed, approached, and Mr. Coyote proceeded to light the fuse. In an instant, the fuse burned down to the stem, causing the bomb to detonate.

In addition to reducing all Mr. Coyote’s careful preparations to naught, the premature detonation of Defendant’s product resulted in the following disfigurements to Mr. Coyote:

1. Severe singeing of the hair on the head, neck, and muzzle.
2. Sooty discoloration.
3. Fracture of the left ear at the stem, causing the ear to dangle in the after-shock with a creaking noise.
4. Full or partial combustion of whiskers, producing kinking, frizzling, and ashy disintegration.
5. Radical widening of the eyes, due to brow and lid charring.

We come now to the Acme Spring-Powered Shoes. The remains of a pair of these purchased by Mr. Coyote on June 23rd are Plaintiff’s Exhibit D. Selected fragments have been shipped to the metallurgical laboratories of the

University of California at Santa Barbara for analysis, but to date no explanation has been found for this product’s sudden and extreme malfunction. As advertised by Defendant, this product is simplicity itself: two wood-and-metal sandals, each attached to milled-steel springs of high tensile strength and compressed in a tightly coiled position by a cocking device with a lanyard release. Mr. Coyote believed that this product would enable him to pounce upon his prey in the initial moments of the chase, when swift reflexes are at a premium.

To increase the shoes’ thrusting power still further, Mr. Coyote affixed them by their bottoms to the side of a large boulder. Adjacent to the boulder was a path which Mr. Coyote’s prey was known to frequent. Mr. Coyote put his hind feet in the wood-and-metal sandals and crouched in readiness, his right forepaw holding firmly to the lanyard release. Within a short time Mr. Coyote’s prey did indeed appear on the path coming toward him. Unsuspecting, the prey stopped near Mr. Coyote, well within range of the springs at full extension. Mr. Coyote gauged the distance with care and proceeded to pull the lanyard release.

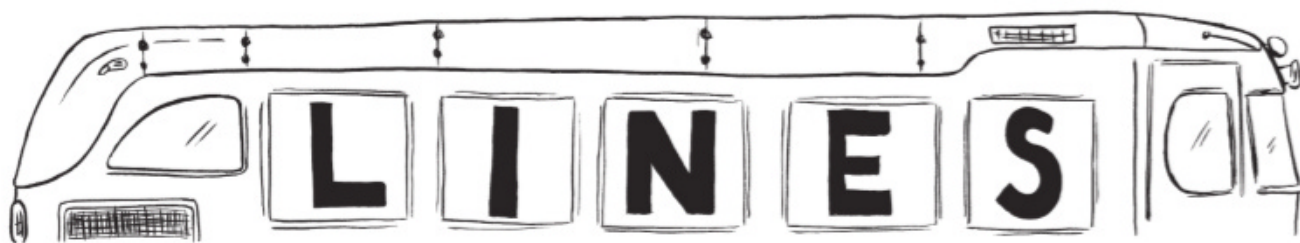
At this point, Defendant’s product should have thrust Mr. Coyote forward and away from the boulder. Instead, for reasons yet unknown, the Acme Spring-Powered Shoes thrust the boulder away from Mr. Coyote. As the intended prey looked on unharmed, Mr. Coyote hung suspended in air. Then the twin springs recoiled, bringing Mr. Coyote to a violent feet-first collision with the boulder, the full weight of his head and forequarters falling upon his lower extremities.

The force of this impact then caused the springs to rebound, whereupon Mr. Coyote was thrust skyward. A second recoil and collision followed. The boulder, meanwhile, which was roughly ovoid in shape, had begun to bounce down a hillside, the coiling and recoiling of the springs adding to its velocity. At each bounce, Mr. Coyote came into contact with the boulder, or the boulder came into contact with Mr. Coyote, or both came into contact with the ground. As the grade was a long one, this process continued for some time.

The sequence of collisions resulted in systemic physical damage to Mr. Coyote, viz., flattening of the cranium, sideways displacement of the tongue, reduction of length of legs and upper body, and compression of vertebrae from base of tail to head. Repetition of blows along a vertical axis produced a series of regular horizontal folds in Mr. Coyote’s body tissues—a rare and painful condition which caused Mr. Coyote to expand upward and contract downward alternately as he walked, and to emit an off-key, accordionlike wheezing with every step. The distracting and embarrassing nature of this symptom has been a major impediment to Mr. Coyote’s pursuit of a normal social life.

As the Court is no doubt aware, Defendant has a virtual monopoly of manufacture and sale of goods required by Mr. Coyote’s work. It is our contention that Defendant has used its market advantage to the detriment of the consumer of such specialized products as itching powder, giant kites, Burmese tiger traps, anvils, and two-hundred-foot-long rubber bands. Much as he has come to mistrust Defendant’s products, Mr. Coyote has no other domestic source of supply to which to turn. One can only wonder what our trading partners in Western Europe and Japan would make of such a situation, where a giant company is allowed to victimize the consumer in the most reckless and wrongful manner over and over again.

Mr. Coyote respectfully requests that the Court regard these larger economic implications and assess punitive damages in the amount of seventeen million dollars. In addition, Mr. Coyote seeks actual damages (missed meals, medical expenses, days lost from professional occupation) of one million dollars; general damages (mental suffering, injury to reputation) of twenty million dollars; and attorney’s fees of seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Total damages: thirty-eight million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. By awarding Mr. Coyote the full amount, this Court will censure Defendant, its directors, officers, shareholders, successors, and assigns, in the only language they understand, and reaffirm the right of the individual predator to equal protection under the law. ♦



I often think about my grandma when making comics.





LOST ART

What the author wanted to be before he decided to become a writer.

BY JOHN UPDIKE



In the thirties and forties, when I was growing up, the cartoonist occupied a place in the cultural hierarchy not far below that of the movie star and the inventor. Walt Disney, Al Capp, Peter Arno—who, now, could attain their celebrity with just pen and ink? I cut my teeth on blocks and rubber toys depicting Disney characters, illiterately pondered oilcloth pages showing Donald Duck when he looked more like a gander, learned to read from a cardboard booklet telling the cautionary tale of the Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf, and climbed up through the comics section of the local paper

into the slightly racier world of comic books and the single-image cartoons, usually captioned, in *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Esquire*, and—much the best and most thought-provokingly adult—*The New Yorker*. Together, from chewable Disney artifact to decipherable Thurber scrawl, they formed a world that was realer to me than all but a few patches of the substantial world that had not been conjured up by cartoonists.

This world offers a child many sites for passionate involvement: the keyboard of a piano, for instance, or the workings of an automobile engine. By

my teens, I had friends who were clever in one or the other realm; one boy, years before we got our drivers' licenses, could identify the make of car—cars were overwhelmingly of Detroit manufacture then—at a glance from a block or more away. He loved cars, and love breeds knowledge. I was able to identify all the cartoonists as they appeared in a magazine, which I rapidly leafed through upside down while my audience—usually an audience of one, and soon bored—confirmed me right side up. Like trees for an arborist, cartoons have personalities whose recognition the informed mind attains before any conscious sorting out of traits, just as we spot a known face, or even a certain swing of the body, at a distance that blurs all details.

I loved cartoons—almost any cartoon that met a modest standard of professional crispness—and studied them as if my salvation lay somewhere in their particularities of shading and penmanship. V. T. Hamlin, for instance, who drew the syndicated strip “Alley Oop,” had a deliberate, gridlike style of cross-hatching that, mixed with the peculiar inverted proportions of his cavemen's legs and arms, signalled a special solidity in the progress of his dinosaur-studded panels. Hamlin, like Alex Raymond of “Flash Gordon” and Harold Foster of “Prince Valiant” and Milton Caniff of “Terry and the Pirates” and then “Steve Canyon,” seemed to be operating well within his artistic capacities, as opposed to Chester Gould of “Dick Tracy” and Harold Gray of “Little Orphan Annie,” who I felt were drawing at the very limit of their skills, with a cozy, wooden consistency; Gould, in his doubts that he had made this or that detail clear, would sometimes enclose an enlargement within a sharply outlined balloon, with an arrow and a label saying “2-Way Wrist Radio” or “Secret Compartment for Cyanide.” Fontaine Fox of “Toonerville Folks” and Percy Crosby of “Skippy,” on the other hand, worked with a certain inky looseness, a touch of impatience in their confident pen lines. This inky ease attained opulence in Al Capp's “Li'l Abner,” the lines of which experienced a voluptuous thickening when limning the curves of

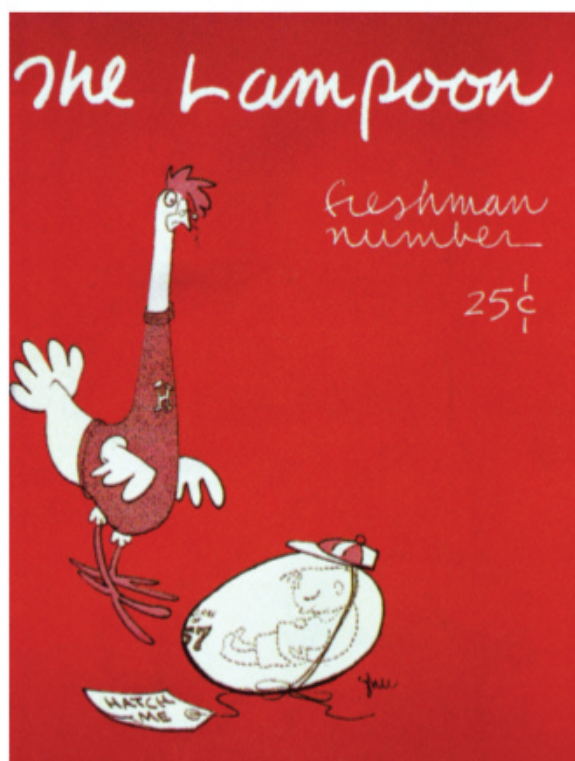
In some issues of the Harvard Lampoon, over half the art work was by Updike.

Daisy Mae or Moonbeam McSwine. Capp and Caniff and Will Eisner, who drew the bloody, vertiginous “Spirit” comic books, were virtuosos; closer to a child’s heart, and containing the essence of cartoon reality, were the strips of finite artistic means, like “Mutt and Jeff” and “Bringing Up Father” (Jiggs and Maggie)—holdovers from an earlier, vaudevillian era—and adventure strips whose implausibility was framed in an earnest stiffness of execution, such as “The Phantom” and “Mandrake the Magician.” Strikingly minimal, in that pre-“Peanuts” era, was Crockett Johnson’s “Barnaby,” whose characters appeared in invariable profile and whose talk balloons were lettered not by hand but by mechanical typesetting. In my love of cartoons I sent away to cartoonists, care of their syndicates, begging for a free original strip; surprisingly many of them obliged. My sample “Barnaby” strip slowly shed, over the years, its glued-on lettering.

At a certain votive stage, I cut out favorite strips and made little long cardboard books of them, held together with those nail-like brass fasteners whose flat stem splits open, it always occurred to me, like a loose-jointed dancer’s legs. In my passionate doting I cut cartoons out of magazines and pasted them in large scrapbooks, agonizing over which to choose when two were back to back—my first brush with editorial judgment. And of course I copied, copied onto paper and onto slick white cardboard, trying to master each quirk of these miniature universes. Li’l Abner’s hair was always seen with the parting toward the viewer, and Mickey Mouse’s circular ears were never seen on edge, and Downwind, in Zack Mosley’s “Smilin’ Jack,” was always shown with face averted, and Smokey Stover, in Bill Holman’s “Krazy Kat”-ish slapstick, kept saying “Foo” apropos of nothing and drove vehicles that were endlessly shedding their nuts and bolts. God—the heat, the quest, the bliss of it—was in the details. The way the letters of POW! or SHAZAM! overlapped, the qualities of the clouds that indicated explosions or thoughts, the whirling Saturns and stars that accompanied a blow to the head, the variations played upon the talk bal-

loon, that two-dimensional irruption into the panel’s three-dimensional space, invisible to its inhabitants and yet critical to their intercourse—all this had to be studied, imitated, absorbed. The studying occurred mostly on the floor, my head lifted up on my elbows but not very high. When I drew, too, my nose had to be close to the paper, though I was not generally near-sighted. But the *entering in* required close examination, as though I were physically worming my way into those panels, those lines fat and slender, those energetic zigzags, those shading dots I learned to call Benday.

A craft lore existed, of pen nibs, fine brushes, blue pencils, art-gum erasers, whiteout, and Higgins India ink (which came in broad-bottomed bottles that nevertheless could be knocked over, as several indelible stains on my



family’s carpets testified). The prestige of cartooning during the Depression and the forties was such that one did not have to travel farther than the variety store and the adjacent camera shop in the center of our small Pennsylvania town to find most of the necessary equipment. Bristol board (two- or three-ply, more flexible and ink-accepting than the slick posterboard children use in school), and a cardboard whose rippled surface would turn Conté crayon into halftones, and scratchboard, whose clayey top layer could be scraped to make white on black—for those one had to travel to

the nearby city of Reading, where a number of art-supply stores, some combined with a framer’s shop, offered their wares to the artsy-craftsy crowd. Black-and-white cartoons were reproduced by means of line cuts, which failed to register washes and pencilled shadings. A great deal of technology went into creating the impression of gray; cross-hatching, stippling, and crayon textures could be done by hand, and then there were sheets of Benday in many patterns, to be laid on and selectively cut away. There was even a treated cardboard, Craftint, that, depending on which of two chemicals was brushed on, produced fine stripes or a crosshatch, thus supplying two degrees of halftone. My high-school yearbook, for which I did many illustrations—more than anyone asked for—contains examples of this mechanical hatching, and of most of the other



techniques my apprenticeship claimed acquaintance with.

I drew not for the sake of drawing but to get into metal—to have the work of my hand be turned into zinc cuts and by this means printed. The first cuts made from a drawing of mine—a Christmas card, perhaps, portraying the family dog, or a caricature done for the class-play program—were to me potent objects, a purchase on power. In the alchemical symbology of those gritty decades, and nowhere more so than in the gritty cities of Pennsylvania, metal was power—steel rails, iron beams, lead bullets, great

greased knitting machines twittering with a thousand nickel-plated needles. The basement “machine shop,” with a metal lathe, was commonplace in the town, and here and there an adept set up a gun shop in his backyard garage. The toy tanks and battleships and dive bombers that simulated the distant, headlined war were metal, though of the cheapest “white” sort, which would bend and break in your hands. When you paid a school visit to the city newspaper, the linotypers would place in your palm a still hot lead slug bearing your name backward. When, in high school, I became a summer copyboy for the same newspaper, I saw how the comic strips arrived from the syndicates in the form of bundled paper matrices—a stiff pulpy colorless paper like that used in egg cartons—and how these rough (but legible, the reverse of a reverse) intaglios were filled with hot metal, and the cooled lead rectangles were locked into forms and recast into curved plates, which were bolted onto the rotary cylinders of the presses and thunderously rolled to produce the daily comic pages. A cartoonist partook of this process at the tentative, scratchy, inky outset, and then was swept up and glorified by a massive, ponderous miracle of reproduction. To get a toehold in this metal world—that was my ambition, the height of my hope.

A 1950 issue of the soon defunct magazine *Flair* contained, in its eccentric format, a booklet about the *Harvard Lampoon*, including photographs of the young, crew-cut editors, the curious mock-Flemish building, and some sample cartoons. Somewhere in the concatenation of aspirations and inadvertences that got me to Harvard, this story played a crucial part. Early in my freshman year, I carried a batch of my cartoons down to the *Lampoon* building, there where Mt. Auburn Street meets Bow at an acute angle, an ornate little brick flatiron fronted by a tower with a sort of cartoon face and, on its hat of roof tiles, a much stolen copper ibis. In due course, some of my drawings were printed in the magazine, and I was accepted for membership. The *Lampoon*,

I was too ignorant an outsider to realize, was a social club, with a strong flavor of Boston Brahmanism and alcoholic intake; to me it was a magazine for which I wanted to work. This I was allowed to do, especially as the upperclassmen year by year graduated and the various editorial offices fell to me. Though Harvard did little to attract cartoonists, in fact there were four on the *Lampoon* in 1950—Fred Gwynne, Lew Gifford, Doug Bunce, and Charlie Robinson—who seemed to me much my betters in skill and sophistication. Fred Gwynne, a multitalented giant who went on to become an actor, best known for “Car 54, Where Are You?” and “The Munsters,” drew with a Renaissance chiaroscuro and mastery of anatomy; Bunce had a fine line, and Gifford, who made his career in television animation, a carefree, flowing brushstroke years ahead of its time. I tried to measure up to their examples, and cartooned abundantly for the *Lampoon*—over half the art work in some issues was mine—but the budding cartoonist in me, exposed to what I felt were superior talents, suffered a blight; my light verse and supposedly humorous prose felt more viable. By graduation, I had pretty well given up on becoming a cartoonist. It took too many ideas, and one walked in too many footsteps. Writing seemed, in my innocence of it, a relatively untrafficked terrain.

When I think of my brief cartooning heyday, I see myself at my desk in my narrow room on the fifth floor of Lowell House, working late at night under a hot gooseneck lamp. An undergraduate lives in a succession of rooms, and I drew in all of mine, but this atticlike cubbyhole, occupied in my junior year, comes to mind as *mon atelier*. My nose inches from the garishly illumined bristol board, my lower lip sagging in the intensity of my concentration, a cigarette smoking in an ashtray near my eyes, I am “inking in”—tracing the lightly pencilled lines, trying to imbue them with a graceful freedom while searching out, in this final limning, the contour being described. The nervous glee of drawing is such that I sometimes laugh aloud, alone. I would get so excited by the process, so eager to admire the result,

that I frequently smeared the still wet lines with my hand. This would put me in mind of a tip I had read of in my high-school days: a successful cartoonist advised aspirants to the art, “If you’re not sure the ink is dry, rub your sleeve over it.” It had taken some days before I realized that this was a joke, meant ironically.

Or, the precarious inking done, I am warily slicing, with a lethal single-edge Treet razor blade, the boundaries of a patch of Bunday, or applying, with an annoyingly gummed-up little brush, whiteout to an errant line or a stray blot. Years before, I had studied my collection of begged comic strips, marvelling at the frequency of whiteout touches. Even professionals err. My soul hovers, five stories up, in the happiness of creation, the rapture of conjuring something out of nothing. All around me, my fellow-students are silent, sleeping or communing with the printed page; only I, in this vicinity, am carving a little window into a universe that, an hour ago, had not been there at all.

I dislike drawing now, since it makes me face the fact that I draw no better, indeed rather worse, than I did when I was twenty-one. Drawing is sacred to me, and I don’t like to see it inferiorly done. A drawing can feel perfect, in a way that prose never does, and a poem rarely. Language is intrinsically approximate, since words mean different things to different people, and there is no material retaining ground for the imagery that words conjure in one brain or another. When I drew, the line was exactly as I made it, just so, down to the tremor of excitement my hand may have communicated to the pen; and thus it was reproduced. Up to the midpoint of my writing career, most strenuously in the poem “Midpoint,” I sometimes tried to bring this visual absoluteness, this two-dimensional quiddity, onto a page of print with some pictorial device. But the attempt was futile, and a disfigurement, really. Only the letters themselves, originally drawn with sticks and styluses and pens, and then cast into metal fonts, whose forms are now reproduced by electronic processes, legitimately touch the printed page with cartoon magic. ♦



STYLISH NEW YORK COUPLES

BY VERONICA GENG

These four couples have different names and faces, but they have one thing in common—a strong tendency to appear in articles of this kind, because they are fashion individualists. One couple may prefer an eclectic style, another retro-amalgam, another mongrel revival, and another mixed-soupçon, yet each couple stands on his and her own as a single, unique personality. They show that to be one of a kind you have to be one of a pair.

Artist **Marie Bane** (25) and collector **Morton Braine** (30) dress in simple, bold fabric wrappings—colorful bolts and mill ends layered directly onto the skin with rubber cement. “We call it the Yardage Look,” says Morton, whose current project is winding all the furniture in their Tribeca penthouse with colored thread inherited from his grandparents, Coco Chanel and David Belasco. Adds Marie, “When Julian Schnabel’s show sold out, I thought it was only a matter of time before I’d be rich, too, but then Morton and I needed new outfits to be interviewed for this article.”

Her clothes: Scalamandré, Museum of Tissues (Lyons), Taipei silkworm farms. Mad Frisson and Warren Beatty for shoes.

His clothes: Porthault, Einstein Moomjy. Galerie du Sabot (Brussels) for shoes. Interests: Oneiromancy, vacuuming up bits of thread, intaglio hunting, reading. Restaurants: Chive, La Petite Bière, Imperial Musk-Polyp, Charlie’s Bum Steer, La Tricoteuse, Folie à Deux (Paris).

Neither **William** nor **Mary Molding** (both 88) has bought any clothing in over 50 years. They feel that they have “subsumed fashion under the category of pure tradition.” Both dress exclusively in what Mary calls “lateral hand-me-downs: I wear Moldie’s old clothes and he wears mine.” Real-estate tycoon William likes to wheel and deal on their Park Avenue triplex telex in a Schiaparelli cocktail dress, and relaxes later in “nothing at all except a dab of vintage Shocking on pulse points.” For Mary, founder of the Ghetto Repair League and president of the Don’t Be Beastly to Congress Committee, living well still means “a dinner coat always”—the one handmade for her husband in 1909 by King Edward VII as a sweet-sixteen party favor.

Her clothes: His.
His clothes: Hers.
Interests: Reading, telephoning, telescopes.
Restaurants: “It is impossible to go out.”
Entertain close friends at amusing dinners famous for including musk-polyps in every course.

Annabella Carissima (“Pat”) von Patina (49), a Milan-born architect, and **Stanley Sohoux** (18), former collector, have shaped each other’s design sensibilities in the ongoing process of gradually removing everything they own from their fabulous 40,000-square-foot loft in the bone-meal district. “I’m a bit big on minimalism,” says Pat, “but Stan is completely his own man and has thrown away many of *his* personal possessions, not just mine.” Stan some-

times wears all his clothes at once “so the spatial interpenetrations of the open-plan closets can be kept unobstructed.” True to her innovative “less is more” philosophy, Pat sticks to one label for clothes and keeps her efficient wardrobe stored flat behind the ceiling in a crawlspace.

Her clothes: Ralph Racquet for Women. Warren Beatty and Mad Frisson for shoes.
His clothes: Ralph Racquet for Women for Men.
Interests: Medicinal-brandy tastings, oneiromancy. Visiting friends (Stan). Reading, intaglio disposal (Pat).
Restaurants: La Tricoteuse, Huis Clos, Chive, Imperial Musk-Polyp, Folie à Deux (Paris).

The proprietors of Chive, one of the most popular new dining places in town, **Clive** (35) and **Olive** (30) **Alive** are self-proclaimed “style immortals.” Explains Clive, “By translating ourselves into commodities, we become abstract concepts of exchange; for that which hovers in a shop waiting to be bought is an immutable idea. As long as we are for sale, we cannot be used.” Everything in their East Side apartment has its price sticker—even the much-mended antique purse seine covering the walls, to which are pinned costly holograph pages from Richard Strauss’s “Ariadne auf Naxos” and inexpensive crayon tracings of autumn leaves from their country estate (“Macy’s” in Oxfordshire). The rare Sabayon carpet invites a visitor to lift it and explore the bargains beneath. Both Clive and Olive created their own wardrobes by stitching together labels bought in bulk at wholesale: “We transcend the material.”

Her clothes: Calvin Mazuma Yves Ducat, Vittorio Dinero, Simoleon, Made of Money. Mad Frisson and Warren Beatty for shoes; cobble her own boots from Levi’s labels.
His clothes: Mach Wash Tumble Dry, Property of the Harvard Athletic Association, I.L.G.W.U., It Is Illegal to Remove This Tag. Galerie du Sabot (Brussels) for shoes, Savile Row Barcelona for sneakers (worn on the wrong feet).
Interests: Vacuuming thread clippings, reading, taking inventory.
Restaurants: Betamax of Athens, Imperial Musk-Polyp, Folie à Deux (Paris). ♦

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

AD DESIGN SHOW



GIEVES ANDERSON

March 19-22, 2020
Pier 94 NYC

PRODUCED BY:
VORNADO
REALTY TRUST

"PARENT" AS A VERB

Chapter One:

"SLEEP TRAINING"

FIRST PUBLISHED JANUARY 24, 2018

OUR DAUGHTER CAN'T (WON'T?) GO TO SLEEP WITHOUT ONE OF US IN THE ROOM.



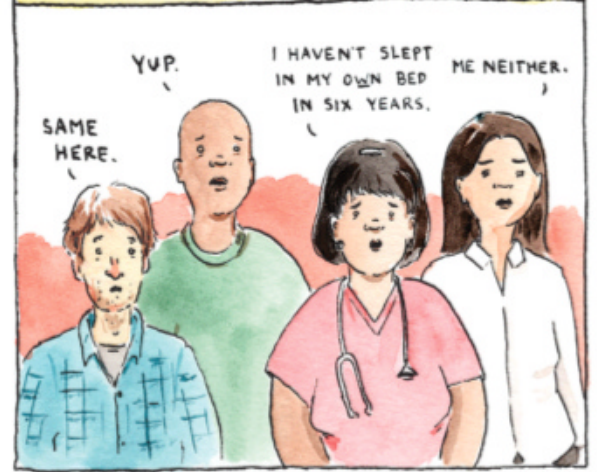
WE SLEEP-TRAINED HER AS A BABY, BUT IT ALL FELL TO SHIT WHEN SHE WAS TWO AND A HALF.



I USED TO SCOFF AT THIS KIND OF THING.



IT TURNS OUT THAT WE'RE NOT ALONE IN THIS, WHICH MAKES ME FEEL A LITTLE LESS LIKE A MARK IN MY KID'S ONGOING SLEEP CON.



IT'S EXASPERATING—NIGHTTIME IS IMPORTANT WORK TIME FOR ME.



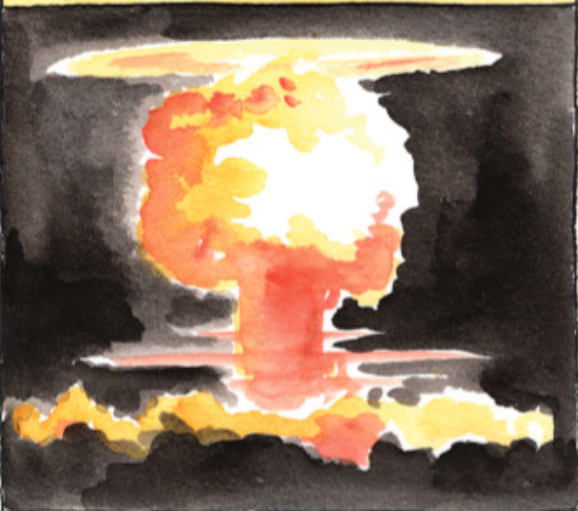
BUT IT'S ALSO REALLY VERY SWEET.



LET'S FACE IT—AT SOME POINT IN THE NOT SO DISTANT FUTURE, SHE PROBABLY WON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME.



BUT, IF WE'RE BEING HONEST, THESE DAYS THAT FUTURE FEELS LIKE OPTIMISM.

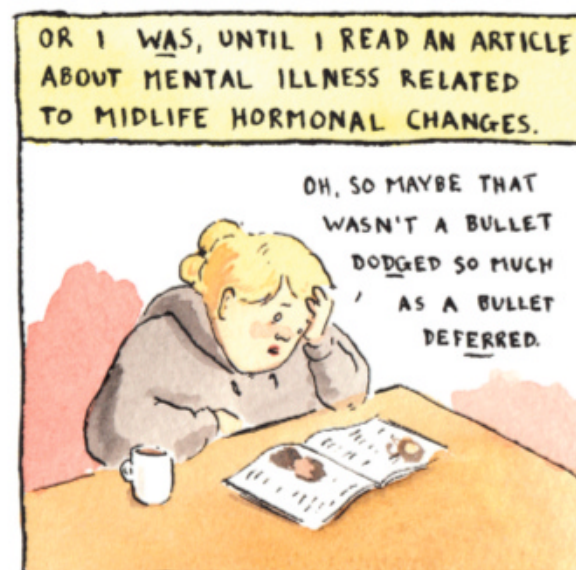
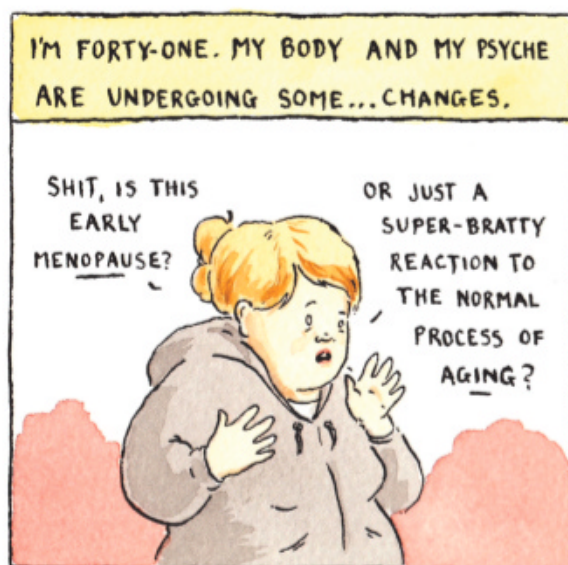
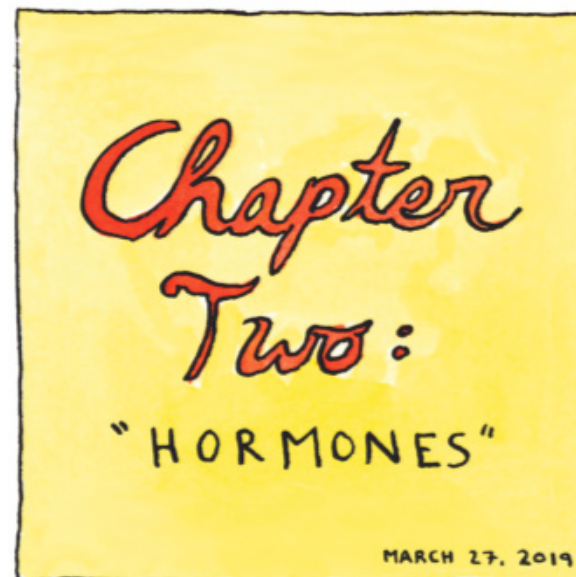


AS I LIE THERE WITH HER, I THINK ABOUT THE FAMILIES PRESERVED IN THE RUINS OF POMPEII—MOTHERS CURLED AROUND THEIR CHILDREN IN A LAST DESPERATE GESTURE OF LOVE AND PROTECTION.



REAL TALK: IF WE'RE ALL GONNA DIE IN A NUCLEAR WAR, THERE'S NO OTHER POSITION I'D RATHER BE INCINERATED IN.





OR, MAYBE, THIS IS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE WHEN IT'S TIME TO START SINGING A DIFFERENT SONG ALTOGETHER.



Chapter Three:

"CHURCH"

SEPTEMBER 19, 2018

I GO TO CHURCH. SOMETIMES THAT FEELS LIKE A WEIRD THING TO ADMIT.



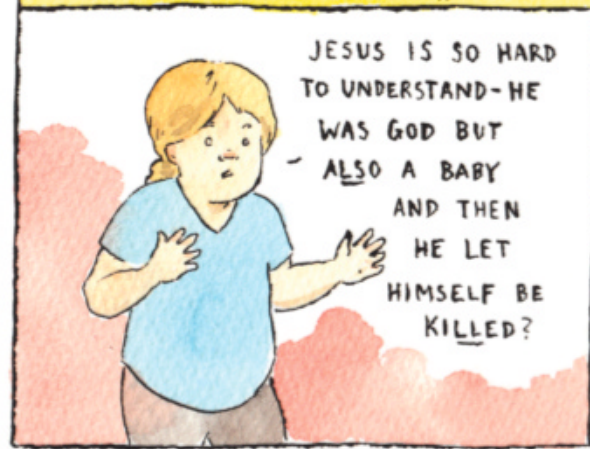
FAITH—REAL FAITH—IS A TRICKY THING FOR ME. I VIEW MY RELIGION AS A METAPHOR, AS WISHY-WASHY AS THAT SOUNDS. AND I HOPE.



BUT YOU KNOW WHO DOESN'T TAKE THESE THINGS METAPHORICALLY? MY DAUGHTER.



A LOT OF SCRIPTURE IS CONFUSING TO HER, BUT SHE NEVER QUESTIONS ITS VERACITY.



SHE BELIEVES IN A LOT OF OTHER THINGS, TOO, BUT THE CRACKS ARE STARTING TO SHOW.



I CAN TAKE OR LEAVE SANTA CLAUS, BUT I NEED A BEAUTIFUL STORY TO TELL HER WHEN SHE ASKS THE HARDER QUESTIONS.



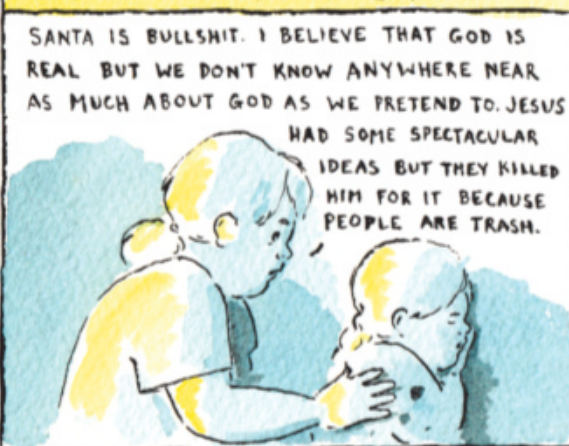
I HAVE A FRIEND WHO GREW UP THE DAUGHTER OF A MINISTER. WHEN SHE REALIZED THE TRUTH BEHIND ONE SET OF MYTHS, SHE TOOK IT TO A PERFECTLY LOGICAL CONCLUSION.



SHE ASKS ME THE HARD QUESTIONS BECAUSE HER PARENTS ARE THE OTHER THING SHE HAS UNQUESTIONING FAITH IN—FOR NOW.



THERE'S WHAT I TELL HER, AND THEN THERE'S THINGS I HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT HOW TO SAY YET.



WE'LL SEE. FOR NOW, I'M JUST GONNA TAKE IT ONE BELIEF AT A TIME.





KEITH RICHARDS' DESERT-ISLAND DISKS

BY NOAH BAUMBACH

Each month, the editors of Pulse magazine ask a rock-and-roll star to list which ten CDs he or she would bring to a desert island. Keith Richards selected the following:

Little Richard: "Lucille" or "Tutti Frutti"
 Beethoven's Third Symphony
 Anything early by the Nat King Cole Trio
 Everly Brothers: "That's Just Too Much"
 Robert Johnson: "32-20 Blues"
 Big Bill Broonzy
 Louis Armstrong: "Pratt City Blues"
 Blind Willie McTell
 Carla Thomas
 Otis Redding
 Brenda & the Tabulations: "Who's Lovin' You"

DAY ONE

Rigged a distress flag with me gypsy scarf, but it droops like Mick's jowls. While waiting for it to fly, played all ten disks. Ate a peanut-butter-and-Fluff sandwich the missus packed for me dinner and washed it down with me new poison of choice: Stoli and Sunkist. Smoked a Marlboro Red and watched the sun go down. Was lulled into me forty winks by the island's own music, the flop flop of the waves and the caw caw of the parrots.

DAY TWO

Went combing for shells for me bungalow back home. In the uninhabited

spots, one gets first pick, so to speak. Dragged back a whopping conch! Chilled out with me CDs. The sign of good music: if it's got some soul, ya know, you can listen to it over and over. That cat Little Richard must've had a desert island in mind when he wrote "Tutti Frutti." Scanned horizon.

DAY THREE

Do I really need both Big Bill Broonzy and Blind Willie McTell? Thinkin' I should've put some Buddy Holly on that list, or maybe some Four Tops. Had a real craving for "That'll Be the Day." Spent the afternoon scouting for other signs of life and listening to "Tutti Frutti" on repeat.

DAY FIVE

Can't get "Tutti Frutti" out of me head. Perhaps "Lucille" would've been a better pick. Opened me Big Bill Broonzy CD to discover me little one, Theodora, had switched it with the soundtrack to "Elmo in Grouchland." Cheeky critter. I must've missed it before when I was wrestling that monkey for coconuts. Been using the Shuffle option Patti showed me on the disk player to give those ten disks a new life they badly needed. The local birds and monkeys bop along to the tunes; one parrot in particular seems a bit more on key than Don Everly: It's me own Voodoo Lounge. Me Zippo ran out of fluid, so I'm reduced to lighting me Marlboros with two stones.

DAY SIX

The bloody CD player got sand in it and it took the better part of the day to clean it out. Pissed me off. Wanted something to clear "Tutti Frutti" from me brain.

DAY EIGHT

Must remember to put the disks back in their cases: Carla Thomas and Beethoven's Third got warped in the sun. Just me luck, only had a chance to listen to them four dozen or so times. Started using "Tutti Frutti" as a shaving mirror. Man, the crooked reflection really makes me look like that

Celine Dion bird. Next thing you know, like, I'll be banging me chest with me fist. Listen to Nat King Cole enough, you can detect a slight lisp. Ran out of Stoli. Have started mixing Sunkist and salt water for a kick even I'm not quite used to. Ten butts left. Horizon a bloody blur.

DAY TEN

The distance from me chin to me groin is exactly five CDs!

DAY ELEVEN

Tried to signal a passing ship for help—or at least some different disks. Played “Who’s Lovin’ You” on top volume and accompanied it with me Fender. Ship didn’t hear me, man, and I blew a tweeter, so I ejected the disk and tried to reflect little rays of CD light at the craft as an S.O.S. The ship sailed on. In all the excitement, I trampled me sand castles. A real downer. Man, Robert Johnson is depressing: “I’m down this, I’m down that.” Otis Redding’s Mr. Pitiful and me all-black threads ain’t much cheerier. I don’t know if it’s me ocean-water intake or the fact I’ve been smoking sand for a week, but I started to see Chuck Berry playing Kadima on the beach with Muddy Waters. “I got a gal named Sue”—I try to keep morale up, but me fear is that “Tutti Frutti” is inhabiting me mind.

DAY THIRTEEN

Me ten favorite books: “Moby-Dick,” “The Girls’ Guide to Hunting and Fishing,” “Tutti Frutti,” “Gravity’s Rainbow,” “Tutti Frutti” . . . Ah, hell!

DAY SIXTEEN

Tried to play the Everlys backward to look for hidden messages. Big Bill Broonzy is starting to sound too much like that little red Muppet monster. Broonzy ain’t so big; I could whup him. Keep finding meself humming variations on “Tutti Frutti”: “Loosy Goosey” and “Ittut Itturf!”

DAY EIGHTEEN

Let it be known that this was the day

I realized I could put all ten CDs on me ten toes. Makes me look a bit like a princess.

DAY TWENTY-THREE

Aha! Discovered “Tutti Frutti” is inhabiting me conch. Little Richard is evidently very little and trapped inside me shell. Can’t hear the ocean at all when I put it up to me ear. Turned in around five and me silver skull ring tried to bite me in me sleep. Woke up with a cut on me finger.

DAY TWENTY-FIVE

Had a bitch of a row with some parrots who prefer Mick’s solo outings to mine. Creatures are mocking me. Parrots singing “Tutti Frutti” like they invented it. I shut up one cheeky bird by stuffing his beak in the hole in the Everlys. A monkey took me side and I offered him Billy Wyman’s bass position. Horizon slowly unravels.

DAY THIRTY

Re-formed the Stones with the monkey on bass, meself on guitar, a seagull on drums, and a parrot named Daisy singing lead. The bird’s a real prima donna, but can belt it out like bloody Sam Cooke. Played that old chestnut “Tutti Frutti” till the creatures’ bedtime.

DAY THIRTY-ONE

Bloody bird left the group to go solo. Bitch.

DAY THIRTY-FOUR

“I got a gal named Patti, she almost drive me batty.” Not bad. “I got a parrot named Daisy, she almost drive me crazy!” The monkey and me are trying to pry wee, tiny little Richard out of the conch shell. Want to sing him the Patti/batty rhyme. “Tutti Frutti au rutti, too-ttay froo-ttay, au roo-ttay—”

DAY FIFTY-TWO

“A bop-bop a-loom-op a-lop bop boom!” ♦

THE
NEW YORKER

HOLIDAY GIFT ALERT!



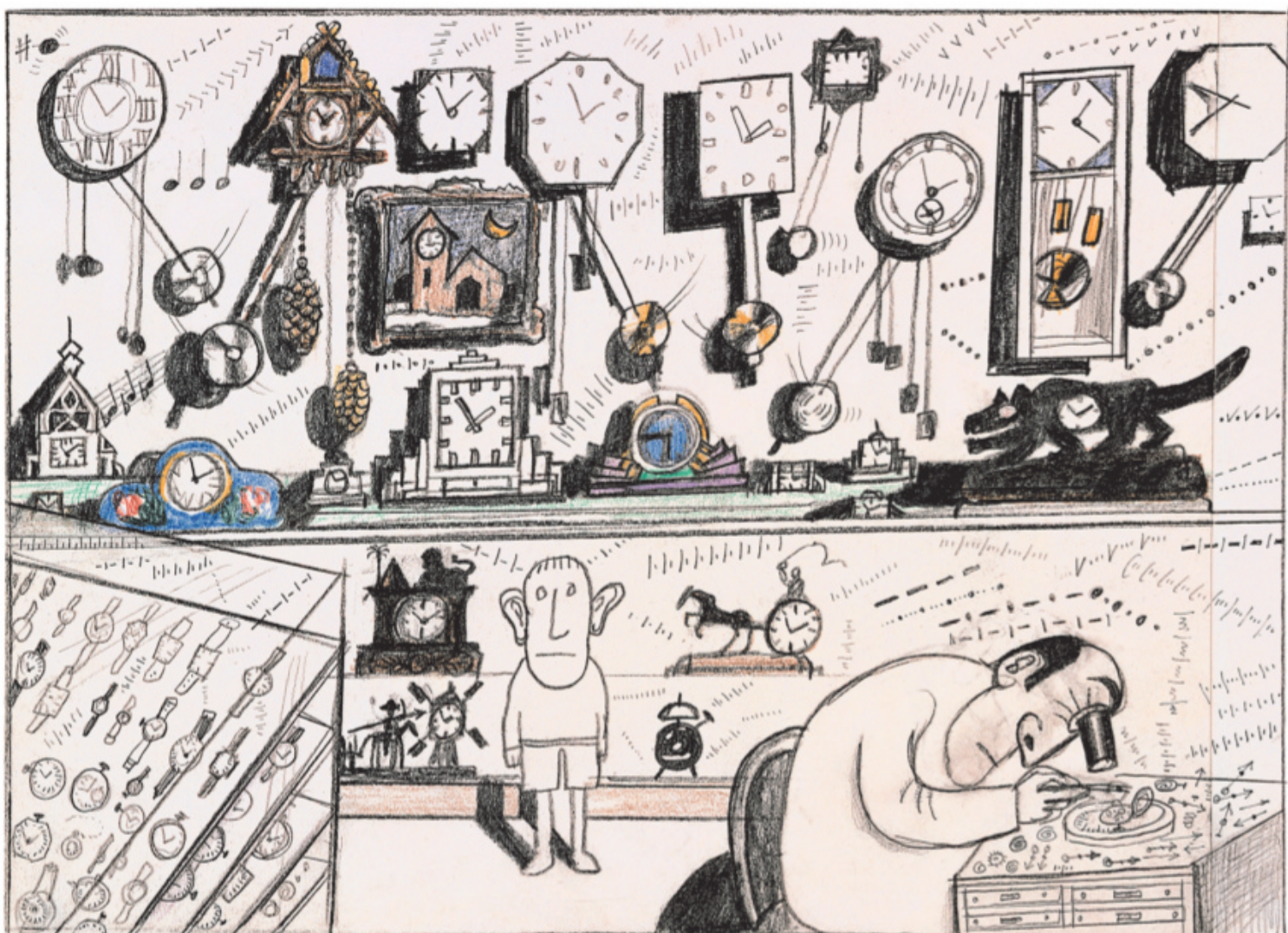
Play the cartoon caption contest in real life

Looking for gift ideas?
With our Cartoon Caption
Game, players compete to write
the funniest captions for two
hundred *New Yorker* Cartoons.

Edward Koren has published more than eleven hundred cartoons in the magazine. He settled in Vermont with his family in 1987, and has served as a member of his town's volunteer fire department for thirty-one years.



"It looks as if our troubles are only beginning."



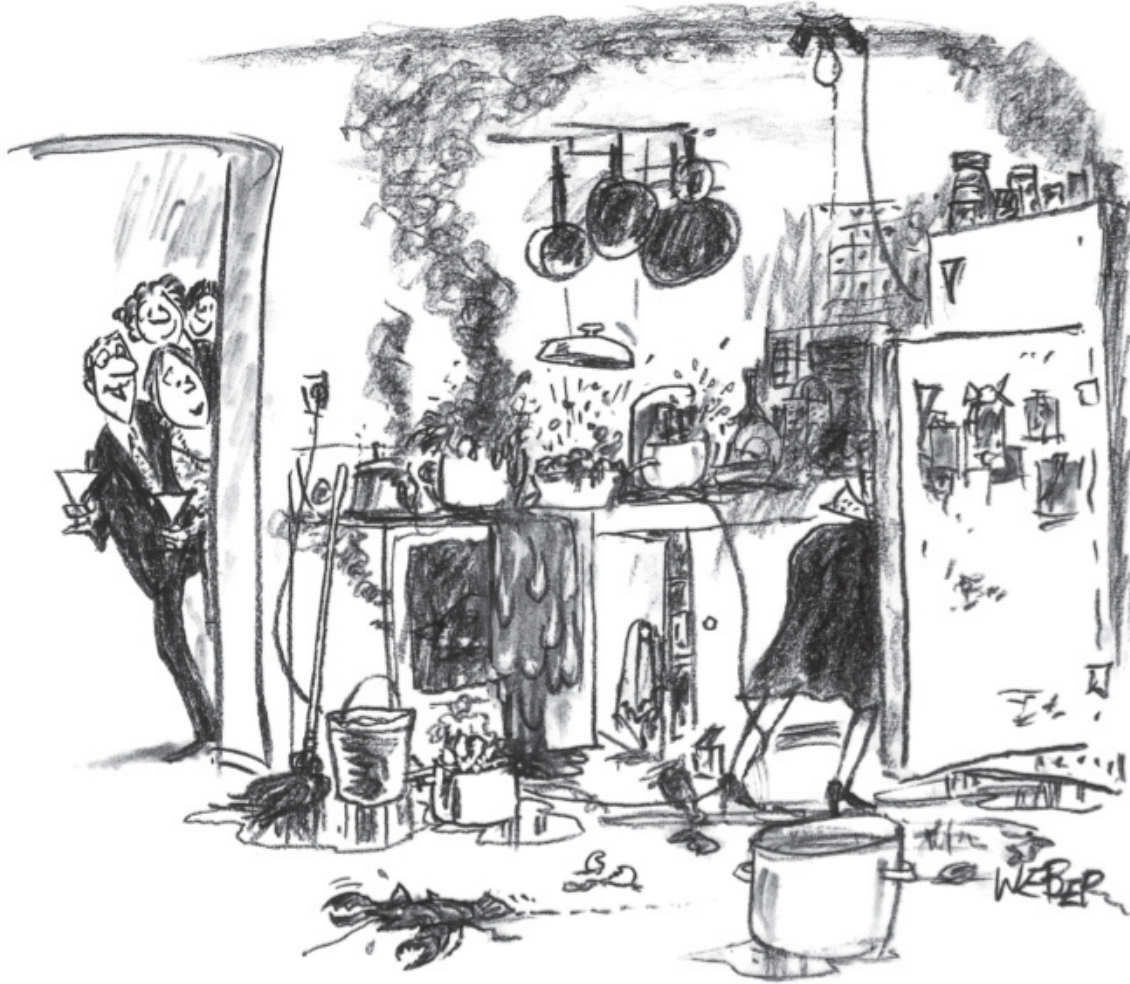
OPPOSITE: TOP: WILLIAM STEIG, AUGUST 26, 1967; BOTTOM: SAUL STEINBERG, MAY 28, 1979. THIS PAGE: MARY PETTY, DECEMBER 4, 1937



"Dear no, Miss Mayberry—just the head."

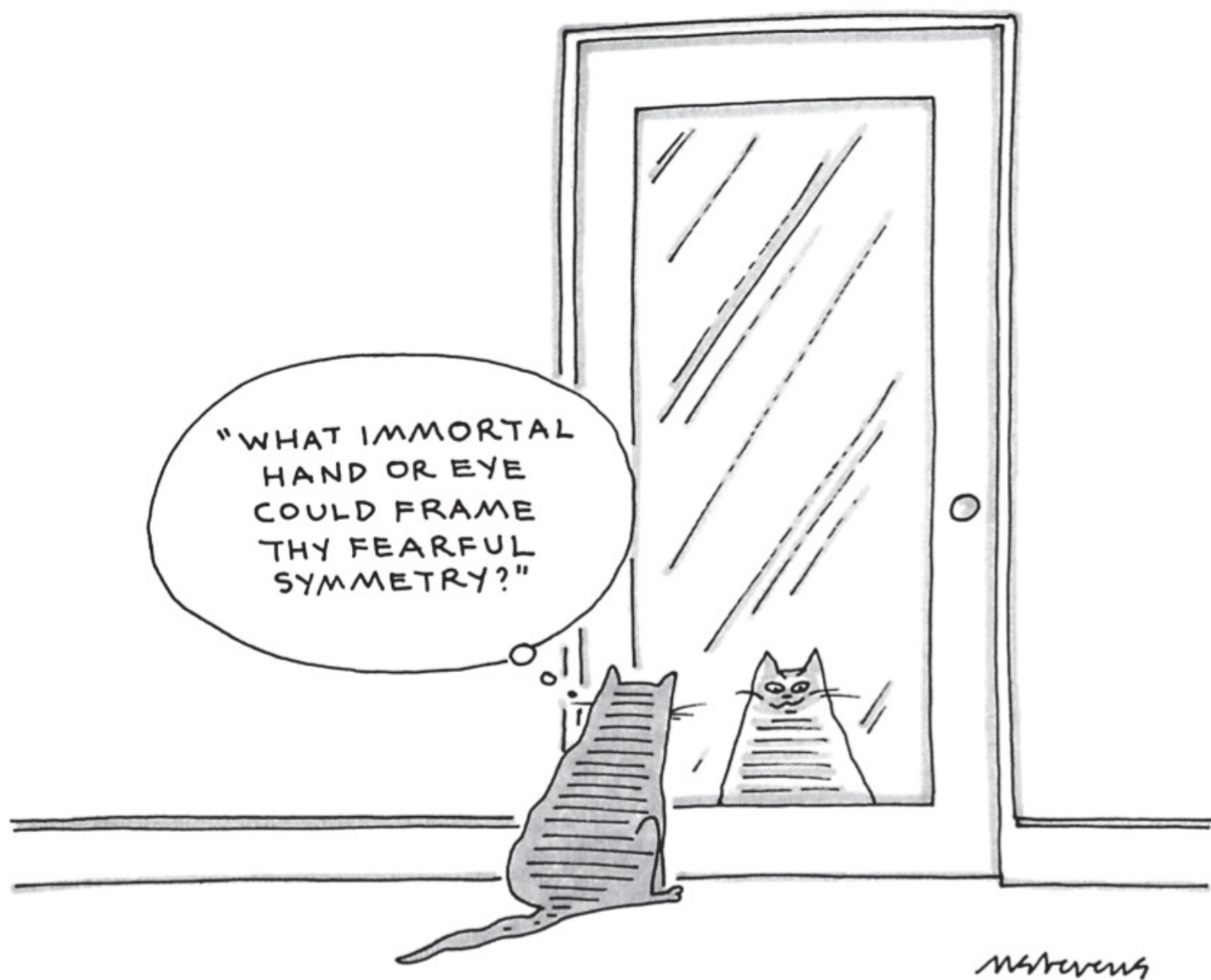
AMY HWANG PICKS HER FAVORITE CARTOONS

Amy Hwang sold her first cartoon to the magazine in 2009. She worked in architecture before pursuing cartooning full time, in 2018. She lives in Scarsdale, New York, with her daughter. Recurring themes in her cartoons include cats and sleep.



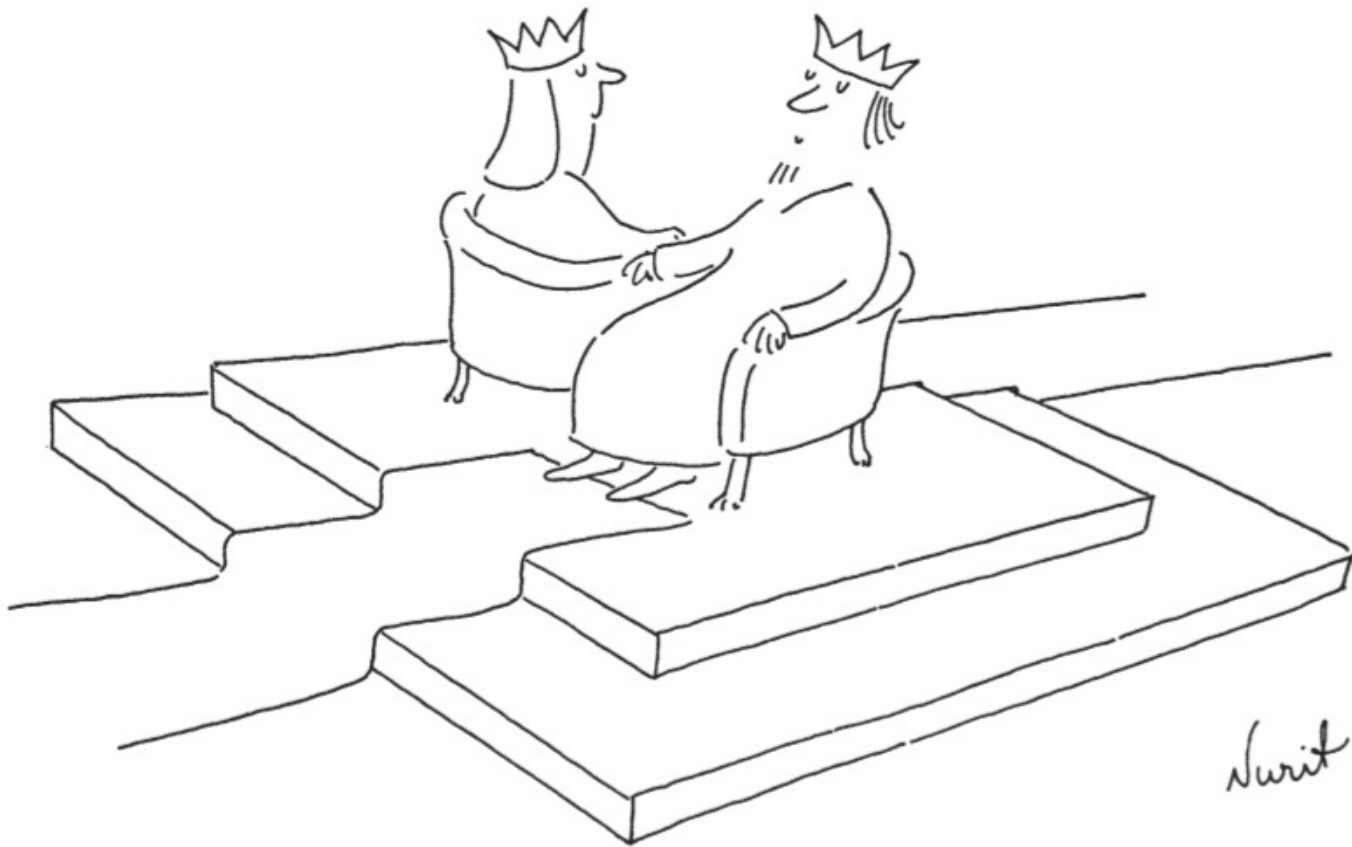
"So this is where the magic happens."



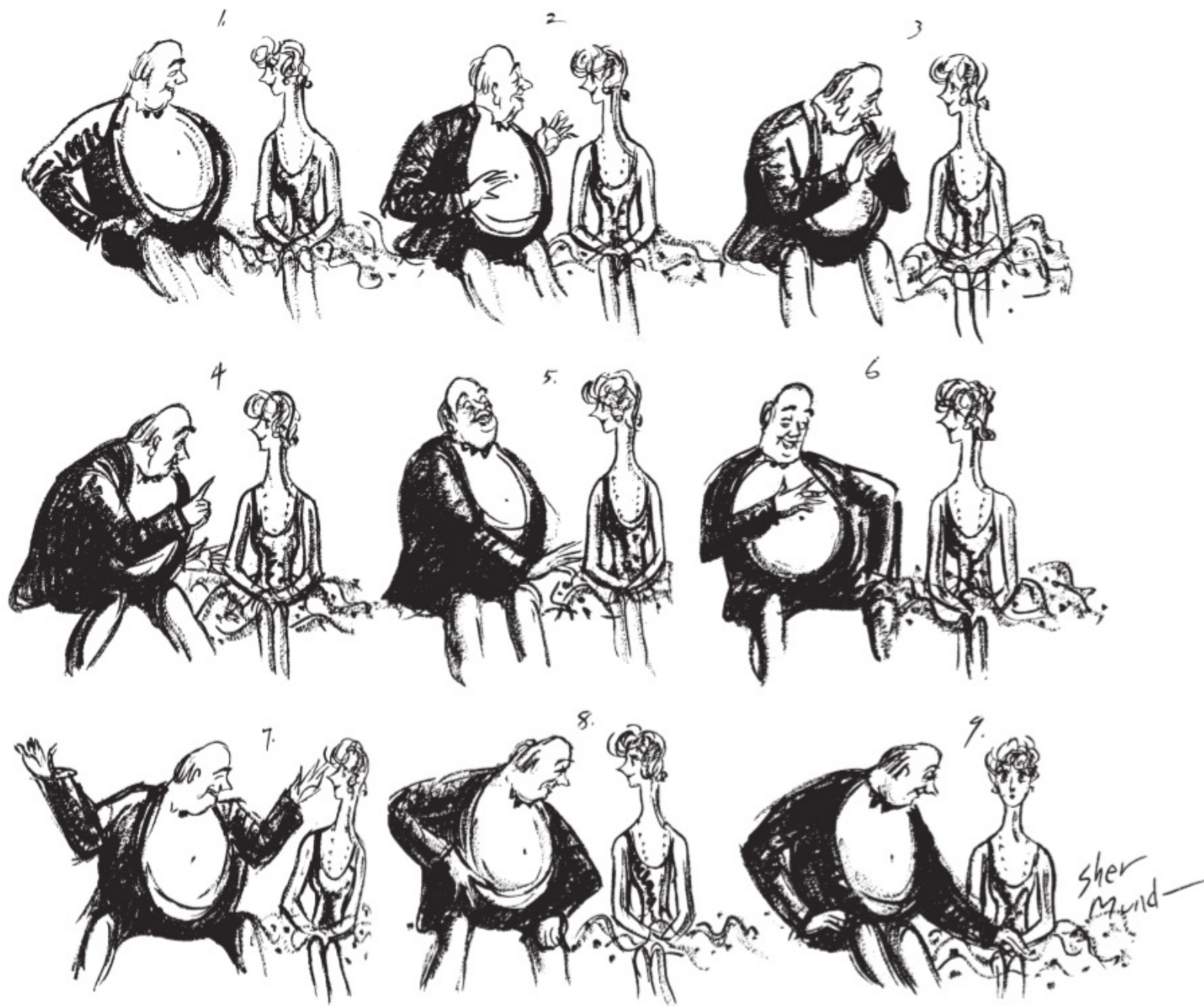


"Why don't you paint a picture—it'll last longer!"

Liza Donnelly is the author of seventeen books, one of which, “Funny Ladies,” is a history of the women cartoonists of *The New Yorker* from 1925 to 2005. She sold her first cartoon to the magazine in 1979 and nobody understood it.



“I shall now quote the passages which I consider obscene.”

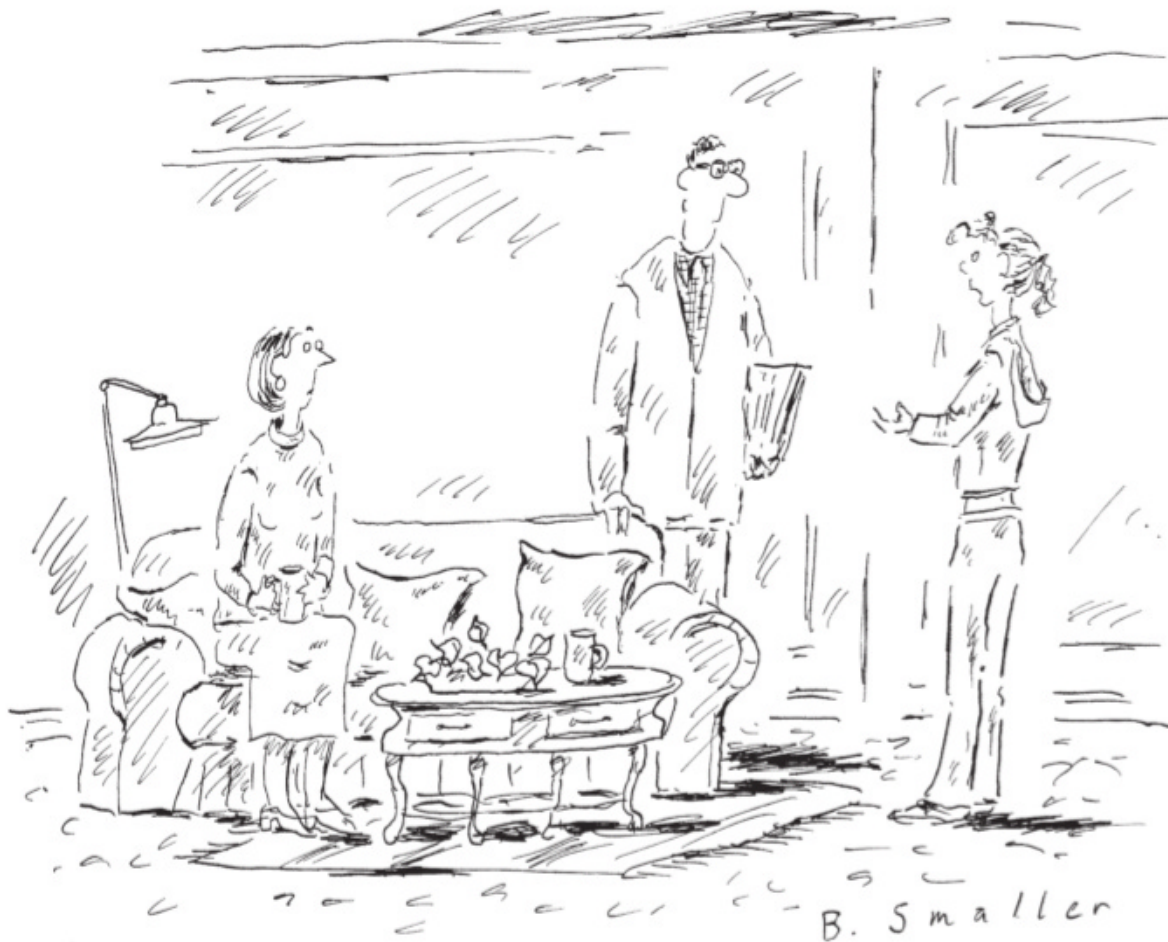


"You're a very intelligent little woman, my dear."

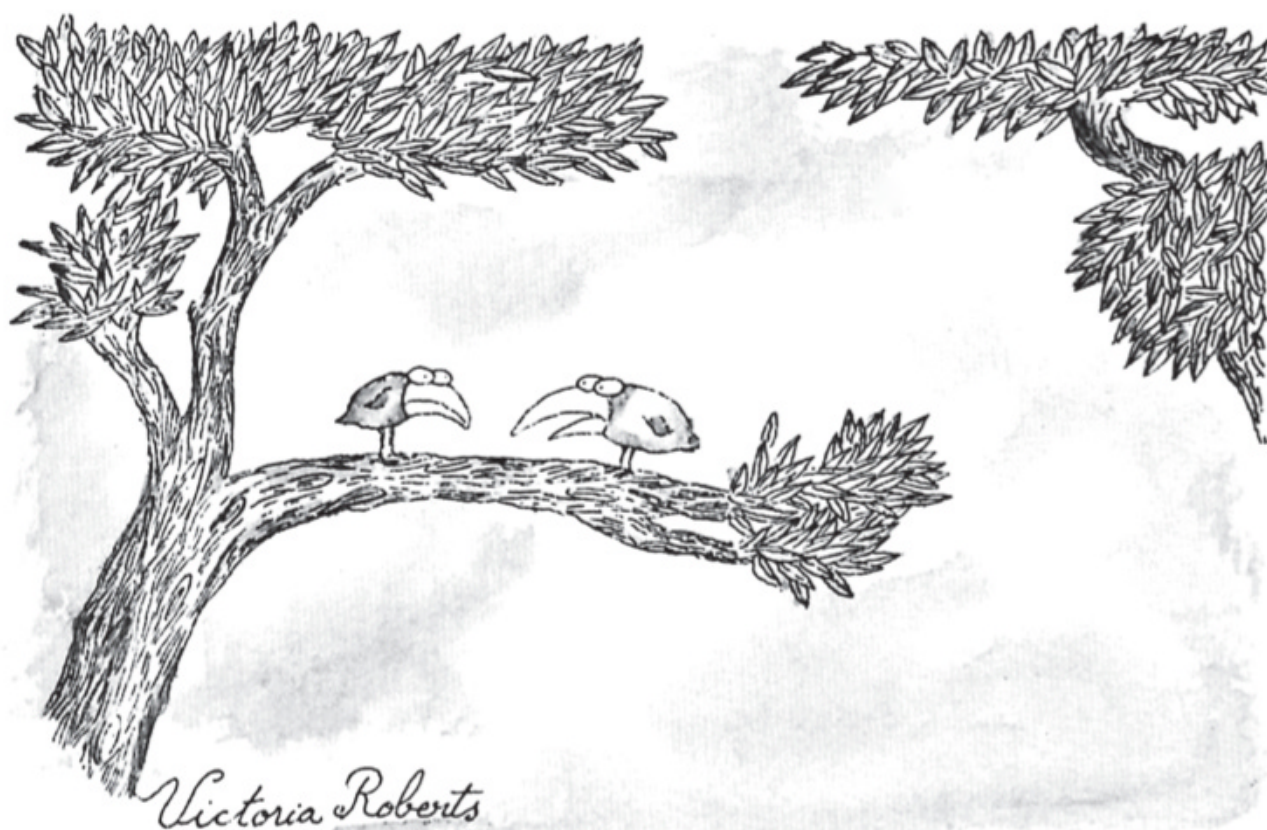


"That's my first wife up there, and this is the present Mrs. Harris."

Liz Montague began contributing to the magazine in 2019, after graduating from college the previous year. She often draws while listening to “Harry Potter” audiobooks, but only the ones narrated by Jim Dale.



“All I ask is a chance to ruin my life in my own way.”



“The Icarus story is just that—a story.”

Zachary Kanin sold his first cartoon to *The New Yorker* in 2005. He was a writer for “Saturday Night Live,” and is the co-creator of “Detroitiers” and “I Think You Should Leave.” He lives in Los Angeles with his wife, their two children, and their dog, Switchblade.



“We just haven’t been flapping them hard enough.”



SAD BUILDINGS IN BROOKLYN

Scenes from the life of Roz Chast.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Certain comic artists carry an aura that makes everything around them look like their work. In the company of Saul Steinberg, a simple Italian restaurant on Sullivan Street could feel as gravely melancholy and precisely ordered as one of his drawings, while a day spent with Bruce McCall has a hallucinatory atmosphere in which everything in Manhattan seems to have been transplanted from a midsize Canadian city in the nineteen-fifties—to the point that he seems able to find parking spaces at will, as if carrying them in his Torontonian pocket. So when the cartoonist and graphic storyteller Roz Chast invites a friend to dinner near her West Side pied-à-terre, where she escapes from her staid, greener Connecticut life, the Turkish restaurant she chooses inevitably turns out to be the most purely Chastian locale in New York: even on a Friday night, the tables seem filled with disconsolate, anxious outsiders, and the waiters wear shirts blazoned with the restaurant's name. ("Why would we need to know its name?" she wonders. "We're already inside.") One would not be surprised to see a melancholy, off-kilter fez on the manager. The distinctive Chast-mosphere—of wistfully rundown circumstances with an undertow of Dada-inflected absurdity—pervades the room. "This place always makes me *nervous*," she says in greeting, and one understands at once that, in her vocabulary, nervous is good, or at least interesting.

Roz Chast has been a cartoonist at *The New Yorker* for about four decades. In that time, she has done what few comic artists do. She has created a universe that stands at sharp angles from the one we know, being both distinctly hers and recognizably ours. Where Charles Addams, her first hero, created a world of mansard-roofed houses and ghoulish folks to fill them, hers is the

world of the receding New York middle class: scuffed-up apartments, grimy walls, round-shouldered men perched on ratty armchairs and frizzy-haired women in old-fashioned skirts—no Chast skirt has ever risen above the knee—marked by a shared stigmata of anxiety above their eyes. The style in which they are drawn is as deliberately threadbare ("clunky" is Chast's own word for it) as the scenes themselves, a thing of quick, broken lines, spidery lettering, and much uneasy blank space. Both style and subject matter can be seen as an ongoing projection onto adult life of the even more straitened Flatbush world where Chast grew up, in a four-room apartment. She was raised by schoolteacher parents, who were notable for the truly awe-inspiring extent of their phobias—traits that she richly bodied forth in her hugely successful 2014 graphic memoir, "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" She has long signed her work as R. Chast ("not in honor of R. Crumb but not not in honor of him, either"); her never-used full name, Rosalind, was, she explains, a forlorn gift from her parents upon her birth, in 1954, taken from Shakespeare's incandescent heroine in "As You Like It."

The paradox is that, although she has created this imagery of limits and losers, the grownup life she has made for herself is luxuriously filled with friends, family, and obligations. Having led a life adjacent to hers over the past four decades, I've been a frequent witness to and occasional participant in the joyful intensity of her enthusiasms, which range from klezmer music to smart birds—parrots and parakeets. She shares the latter passion with my wife and my daughter, and has joined them in tea parties for the avian set. (The women drink the tea, and the birds do the talking.)

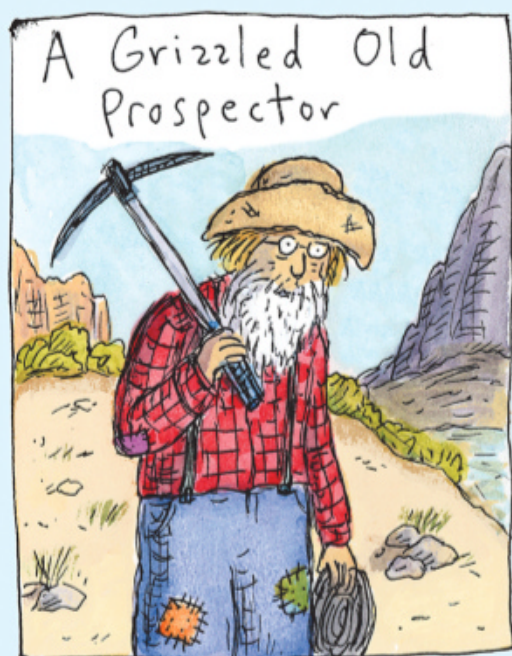
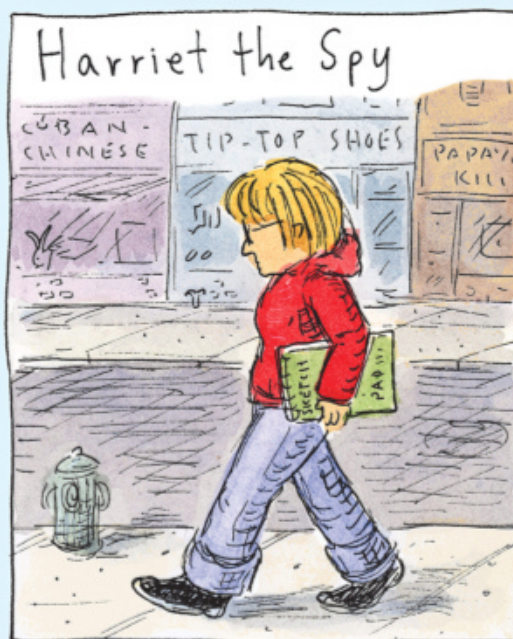
In intimate exchanges, Chast reveals

herself as more tough-minded and self-confident than her deliberately dithery social surface suggests. "I'm going to go home and review this conversation and find every horribly embarrassing thing I've said for the past hour and feel mortified about it," she says over the Turkish meal, not coyly but frankly, as one who has been living with her own neuroses long enough that, as with pet birds, all their mannerisms are well known to her. But, though her work thematizes her apprehension and anxiety, she is, in not so slowly dawning fact, a woman of considerable authority, and unstinting appetites.

This truth—of weight beneath apparent whimsy—extends even to her appearance. The first impulse in describing Roz Chast is to say that she looks exactly like a Roz Chast character: short blond hair, glasses, strong nose, high shoulders. Subsequent investigations transform her into a rather more Nora Ephron-ish figure; few New Yorkers are more gaily, affirmatively opinionated. ("My biggest mistake as a mother? Overselling 'The Magic Mountain' to my teen-agers.") It would not be Chast-like if her ambitions ran in a straight line to her accomplishments—her subjects tend to be wry, worried observers of their own feats—and, in fact, they don't. Her fluent, hyperconscious vibe is more like that of a novelist than a comedian. Told casually that she has a novelist's sensibility, she asks, warily, what that might be. "Truth-telling and story above all else," a friend explains. She accedes enthusiastically, in abruptly bitten-off words. "Oh. Yeah. Absolutely. *That.*"

Many artists and writers describe their arrival at *The New Yorker* as an event—Updike called it the "ecstatic breakthrough" of his professional life. Given the contradictions layered in her work and her character, it's not

I AM...



R. Chast

surprising to learn that, as Chast admits bracingly, the magazine was not her first choice.

During that straitened childhood ("I've never seen anyone in life look as unhappy as Roz does in *all* of her childhood pictures," a good friend says), she found respite through drawing. "I'm living in this four-room apartment in Brooklyn, a crummy part of Brooklyn—not a dangerous part of Brooklyn, just a *crummy* part of Brooklyn—and I just did not understand why I was there," she says. "Throughout my childhood, I couldn't *wait* to grow up. I wanted to be a grownup. Being a child was just not working for me. I didn't understand little kids. 'Let's play! Let's hit each other!' *Why do you want to do that?* Don't you want to stay indoors where it's safe, and read and draw?"

"Drawing was a kind of escape from life. It was also something I could do without having to go out. In a small

apartment, you have a pen or a pencil and you're done." She adds, "You don't need to go out and buy a bunch of stuff, a whole ton of hockey equipment," speaking ruefully, as the outdoory Connecticut mother she has become. She and her husband, the writer Bill Franzen, married in 1984, and have two children.

"My mother didn't let me read comics growing up. She thought comics were totally low rent, for morons. Superheroes, cartoons, animation—didn't matter. I had to go to a friend's house to look at comic books." She points to two sources as essential to turning her love of drawing into her vocation as a cartoonist. One was Addams's work (from this magazine), which she first encountered as a child, in the nineteen-sixties. "'Black Maria,' 'The Groaning Board,' 'Monster Rally,' 'Drawn & Quartered,'" she says, rapturously reciting titles of Addams col-

lections. "These are books that I discovered at the browsing library at Cornell. My parents used to go to Ithaca in the summer—they lived in student quarters and it was cheap. There were other Brooklyn schoolteachers, mostly Jewish, mostly without children. When my parents took me, they let me hang out."

At an angle to Addams's sly morbidities were the broad lines and clear colors of *Mad* magazine, its issues illicitly possessed. "They were so funny and so irreverent, and, it has been pointed out, one of the first institutions that made fun of American culture. I loved it. It made sense to me, because I would watch these shows, these commercials that were entirely stupid, but I didn't know how quite to voice it. It made me laugh so hard—'Cheese & Sandbag Coffee'! For some reason, that killed me. I liked Don Martin. I liked the fake ads and, of course, Al Jaffee. I even liked Dave Berg, and I know it's not cool to like Dave Berg. They were sort of clunky, but there was something funny about the way he drew expressions. They were very appealing."

Leaving home at sixteen ("as fast as I could"), she spent two years at Kirkland College, in upstate New York, and then four years at the Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence. "No one encouraged me to be a cartoonist," she recalls. "I showed my work and they just said, 'I didn't know you were this unhappy.'" Then she returned to New York City, where she took her drawings around to various outlets, selling work to *Christopher Street*, the classy gay men's mag, and *National Lampoon*, among others, and eventually found herself at *The New Yorker* offices, on West Forty-third Street.

"My dream was to be a working cartoonist for the *Village Voice*," she says. "Because that was Jules Feiffer, Mark Alan Stamaty, Stan Mack. There was something very idiosyncratic, very New York, about them, all social comment and not a gag panel. And the *New Yorker* cartoon was a gag panel. I liked that, but I had no interest in *doing* that. I didn't see myself as part of that. I submitted because I thought, Why not? I was working for the *Voice* and for the *Lampoon*, and I thought I should



"There's been a massive ink spill!"

try *The New Yorker*. It's cartoons—same deal.

"I think it was a Wednesday—I called up and found their drop-off day, and I left my portfolio. And that's pretty much what I've been doing ever since. I was absolutely flabbergasted and terrified when I found out I had sold something." She went to pick up her portfolio the following week, and the receptionist gave her a note she struggled to decipher. It read "PLEASE SEE ME. LEE." It was from Lee Lorenz, then *The New Yorker's* art editor. "I remember walking down the hallway in a little bit of a daze, thinking, This is extremely peculiar," Chast says. "It was where they had a map of Manhattan, hung sideways. You made a right into Lee's office, so I went in to see him and he pulled out a cartoon, and he said, 'We want to buy this! Are you excited?' 'Yeah, I am,' I said. I thought I might be dreaming. A little bit out of body. I noticed that the lights were very like my elementary school. I liked that it's not exactly shabby but nothing trying to impress you. Places that are trying to impress me always scare me. They don't impress me, but they scare me. He told me that Shawn"—William Shawn, the magazine's longtime editor—"really liked my work. And I had no *idea* who Shawn was! I assumed it was a first name, someone named Sean, like Sean Connery, who somehow was allowed to like your work. I nodded. 'That sounds good.' I did meet him later, and he doffed his hat and I doffed mine, and I wondered why I was doing this.

"That first cartoon was called 'Little Things.' Lee told me, years later, that some of the older cartoonists were very bothered by it, and asked if Lee owed my family money." The cartoon was a simple grid of made-up objects—the chent, the spak, the redge, the kella—laid out against pure white space, with the only visual excitement coming from the lettering settled in the center of the drawing. Chast was one of the first cartoonists not only to always come up with her own ideas but to use her own lettering to explain her points. *The New Yorker's* standard italicized gag captions were seldom printed beneath her drawings.

"Of all the cartoons I submitted,



it might have been the most personal, the kind of thing that makes me laugh," Chast says. "That wasn't how the older generation felt. The barbarians weren't at the gates—they were *through* the gates."

Cartoonists at *The New Yorker* have always fallen into two basic categories—the Stylish Satirists and the Klutzy Konfessionalists. The two traditions flow, respectively, from Peter Arno and James Thurber, with Arno, in the nineteen-twenties, already picking up details of social life and delivering them in supremely elegant stenography, inventing such virtuosic icons as the drunk whose eyes form a simple X of inebriation, and the nude chorine caught in six neatly curved lines. Thurber, arriving shortly after Arno, was hardly able to draw at all, except in his gingerbread-man style, but he could travel deep within his own mind and put funny hats on his nightmares: you see the bedrock of his private-poetic style in the guilty-looking hippopotamus ("What have you done with Dr. Millmoss?") or the be-whiskered, flippered creature at a couple's headboard ("All right, have it your way—you heard a seal bark!"). There have been many sharp-eyed observers

of manners and mannerisms in the magazine's history: Bob Mankoff's "No, Thursday's out. How about never—is never good for you?" encapsulated social rituals in the nineties as much as Ed Koren's blimp-coated women, fuzz-faced professors, and playground denizens did in the seventies, or Arno's "Well, back to the old drawing board" did in the forties. George Booth and William Steig, by contrast, lived decade after decade only in their heads, which they allowed us, occasionally, to visit.

Chast's work has always been aggressively in the Klutzy Konfessional vein, even when, in the early years, it was only indirectly autobiographical. The assertion of personal style in cartooning is, for her, all cartooning is. "I'm not interested in whether or not this guy can make a cat with googly eyes," she says. "I want to be in a world: you're in Koren world, you're in Booth world, you're in Addams world. *That's* what gets me." To be sure, the awkwardness of her hand is willed in a way that Thurber's was not, as she demonstrates with heartbreaking, freely drawn portraits of her mother on her deathbed in "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?" But the confessional nature of her work lies in the

individual range of obsessions and images it draws upon.

A key to understanding Chast is to see that her people live in a very specific place: a kind of timeless Upper West Side of the mind, already in the process of “cute-ification,” yes, but still filled with secondhand bookstores and vaguely disquieting discount palaces. In Chast’s hands, the neighborhood features a Little Vermont section, with its House of Cheddar, and a Central Park Country Fair (“Come see brawny Akitas pull many times their weight in Sunday papers!”), while its apartment dwellers are not above a little radiator cookery: “Potato: 3 weeks, 5 days.” This is not entirely a joke; there was a period in the late seventies when, living in a stoveless apartment on West Seventy-third Street, Chast cooked on a hot plate that was not much hotter than a radiator. “You’d drop the pasta in, and it would take ten minutes for the water to start to boil again,” she confides cheerily.

But perhaps the secret of her work—the source of its buoyancy—is that the Chast world is far from a wasteland; it’s actually an achieved paradise of cozy rooms and eccentric habits, which, when she discovered it, in the early seventies, was to her infinitely preferable to her truly confining background in Flatbush. “I *hated* going back to see sad buildings in Brooklyn,” she says. “I had zero nostalgia for it. I loved living on West Seventy-third Street.” The underlying jauntiness of this appreciation is what puts

Chast’s people in a soberly smiling mood as they compare cut-rate drugstores, and what puts them in high chef’s hats even as they cook on those radiators. She knows this world down to the ground and below; one of her most cherished cover drawings, from 1990, showed the layers beneath a Manhattan street, including the water mains and steam pipes (Chastian steam pipes, huffing and puffing in squat unison), and still deeper zones for alligators and lost cat toys.

In a living room across the park, Chast is playing a turquoise ukulele. Alongside her is her close friend and frequent collaborator Patricia Marx, a *New Yorker* staff writer, who is strumming a matching uke. In the past two years, an extraordinary amount of Chast’s time has been spent as half of this duo, called Ukelear Meltdown. They run through a set list that includes “Two Middle-Aged Ladies” and the blues classic “Loft of the Rising Rent.”

Despite the improbable musical means—twinned ukuleles and far from professional voices, attempting the illusion of harmony by singing in simple unison but slightly off-register, like a badly printed mimeograph from an ancient elementary school—the duo has played sold-out engagements in such unlikely high-rent venues as Guild Hall, in East Hampton, and Café Carlyle, in New York. The larger Ukelear Meltdown project is the work of the

three women currently in this living room, which, as it happens, is my own, with Chast and Marx joined by my wife, Martha Parker, who is the producer and director of a short-form comedy series about the band.

“Patty is the one who first got the ukulele,” Chast explains. “She went to a wedding, and the people who were organizing the wedding organized a procession of people playing instruments. She chose the uke because it’s basically one step up from the triangle. It’s a cigar box with four rubber bands on it. She told me it was so much fun I had to get one of my own. I got the same turquoise uke, and she was right: it was so much fun. It’s basic chords—it’s really easy. You know the C, the F, and G, and you want to throw in a D if you’re fancy. And you can play just about anything. You won’t be playing it *great*, but you can play it. And, of course, the color, turquoise—I do believe it adds to the sound, on some level.”

Ukelear Meltdown has an ornate invented backstory, offered in performance, in which the duo was roughly as important in the nineteen-sixties as, say, the Lovin’ Spoonful, and has been making spasmodic comebacks ever since. “We basically started making up these stories to make each other laugh: ‘Remember when we were at Woodstock?’” Chast says. “We kept adding to this made-up story. It morphed into Ukelear Meltdown. Patty rewrites the lyrics of songs that are in the public domain. Turquoise and public domain are the two key aesthetic concepts of our band.

“Playing Café Carlyle was like a dream. It was my first time in this famous place, and I’m talent! The audience was amazingly receptive. They got the joke, and it really didn’t last long. One thing about ukulele comedy is that shorter is better. You don’t want to outstay your welcome.” She goes back to the uke, looking as serious as Daniel Barenboim at the piano.

These past three or four years have been a kind of Indian summer for Chast, with blossomings of newly confident work of all kinds: live performances, both antic and more resolute than anything before, and several books—including her downright sprightly and uplifting tale of the city, “Going Into Town: A



“I just can’t understand how they keep unlocking the door.”

PORTRAIT OF GIRL WITH COMIC BOOK

Thirteen's no age at all. Thirteen is nothing.
It is not wit, or powder on the face,
Or Wednesday matinées, or misses' clothing,
Or intellect, or grace.
Twelve has its tribal customs. But thirteen
Is neither boys in battered cars nor dolls,
Not "Sara Crewe," or movie magazine,
Or pennants on the walls.

Thirteen keeps diaries and tropical fish
(A month, at most); scorns jump ropes in the spring;
Could not, would fortune grant it, name its wish;
Wants nothing, everything;
Has secrets from itself, friends it despises;
Admits none to the terrors that it feels;
Owns half a hundred masks but no disguises;
And walks upon its heels.

Thirteen's anomalous—not that, not this:
Not folded bud, or wave that laps a shore,
Or moth proverbial from the chrysalis.
Is the one age defeats the metaphor.
Is not a town, like childhood, strongly walled
But easily surrounded; is no city.
Nor, quitted once, can it be quite recalled—
Not even with pity.

—Phyllis McGinley

Love Letter to New York"—that are more broadly accessible than her earlier collections of *New Yorker* cartoons. This new public energy was sparked, her friends believe, by the success of her memoir-in-cartoons, "Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?"

"I would not say my cartoons are autobio," Chast observes, "but my life is always reflected in them." Yet "Can't We Talk," which won prizes and sat on top of the best-seller lists, is personal in a more specific way, being an account of her parents' last years. In comic-book form, it is an unsparing study of the claustrophobic terrors of getting old; any middle-aged person who reads it will find his eyes darting around his own environment, checking for signs of the relentlessly incremental household grime that Chast spies creeping in with age. But the book also conveys a compassionate and reflective view of the child, even the grown child, who is helpless in the face of parental fadeout.

It inspects, in depth, the personalities of her weak, worried, but benevolent father and her hard-edged, peasant-tough mother, with Chast herself caught in a permanent meta-cycle of well-meant gestures, torn between compassion and exasperation, having to be kind when you just want to be gone.

From a compositional point of view, the book is amazing in the variety of formats it employs: when photographic evidence is necessary to capture the sheer clutter of her parents' long-occupied apartment, we get photographs. When single-panel emphasis is essential, we get magnificent single panels—among them an audacious and painful drawing of a blue baby, her older sister, who lived for only a day. And then, in the last, shattering pages, Chast offers those quiet, detailed drawings of a formidable parent's final moments.

Chast gives credit to the graphic storytellers who came before her, along with her, and after her. "With that book,

like everybody else, I just . . . dove into it," she says. "I was so *fatootsed* by the whole thing, my shrink said, 'What about chapters?' And I was"—she electrifies her face. "Unless you're a better hack than me, every project has its own rules and its own complexities. Only by making a million mistakes and taking a million false turns could I get there. I couldn't have done that book without the example of Art Spiegelman and that whole generation of graphic novelists," she says, citing Marjane Satrapi, the author of "Persepolis," as another important influence.

But, unlike some artists, she doesn't see much difference between the classic cartoon and the graphic novel or memoir. "I think making jokes is *always* a way of being subversive without being directly confrontational," she says. "When someone's being a jerk or a bully or an asshole, I don't really have the courage to go up to that person and say, 'You're a bully and an asshole!' He could knock my block off! I've never done that. It's my *fantasy* to do that. I got yelled at not that long ago, by some French woman at Uniqlo, because I was looking at some sweaters and I messed up the pile. And she wasn't even one of the people who worked there. It was, like, they were already messed up—a clearance thing? And I was looking through for my size, and this woman came up and yelled at me. I wish I could have said something back to her that was really quick and devastating—her head would have exploded. So I came home and I drew it and felt better. She was a horrible person, and I hope she gets gout. Or a goiter. A permanent goiter. Inoperable. There must be some Yiddish curse: 'May you run around with a goiter!'"

Although the Ukelear Meltdown project began as offhand whimsy, it has, if not exactly deepened, then broadened in meaning. In one scene from the comedy series, Chast, in character, confesses to her fictional son that her long-standing claim about having had a platinum record back in the sixties was a lie. She plays it with gravity and tenderness.

"We have to practice the whole lamb cycle," Chast now says to Marx, in the living room. The "lamb cycle" involves the songs "Mary Had a Comfort Lamb"

and the restaurant plaint “Blah-Blah, Waitstaff.” Looking down gravely at the lyric sheets, they begin to sing, sort of.

On a Sunday in October, the Chast-Franzen household in Connecticut is getting ready for Halloween. Bill Franzen has been creating an annual Halloween display for the past quarter century, and its arrival each year has become a major event in Ridgefield, as well as in the family’s life. Chast is driving through their leafy little town for lunch at her favorite Greek diner, the one corner of the Upper West Side in the state.

From behind the wheel, she emphasizes her late arrival to driving. “The subway is how God intended people to get around. You get on the train and you transfer at Fifty-ninth Street. That I like. And driving I don’t. I don’t like *deer*. I don’t like deer jumping out at you. You go to dinner with someone

and have two glasses of wine in the city, you get on the subway, you don’t think, Now I’m going to have to deal with *deer*.” Yet, very much in the Chast spirit, when you are her passenger, she drives skillfully and speedily down rain-slicked Connecticut roads.

Franzen and Chast met when he was a young office worker at *The New Yorker*. “Bill was an interoffice messenger and I was in on a Wednesday, and he was so nice and he showed me some funny postcards—clowns waterskiing in a pyramid, it was so bananas—and then I had to go and I met him a few days later, and we started dating. 1980. It’s really nuts, isn’t it? We got married in 1984. When we were kids. That’s how I refer to us around our own kids: ‘When we were running around in New York.’”

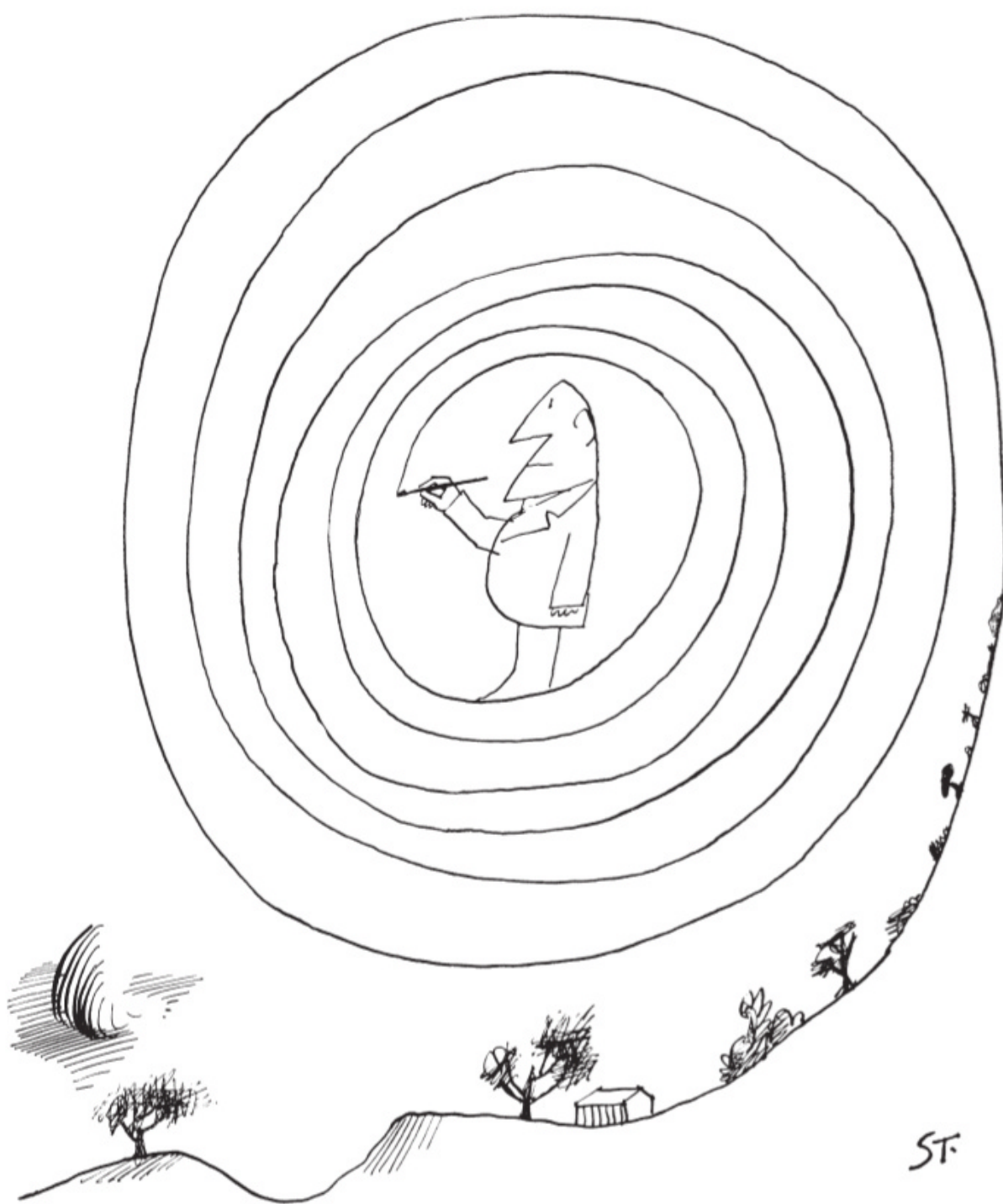
Franzen’s family hails from the Midwest; he was raised in Minnesota with a family farm in Iowa, a background that Chast viewed with wonder and

alarm. (Close observers of her work in the nineteen-eighties will recall the sudden appearance of drawings set in central Iowa, “a fantastic place to park.”) Her husband’s rural roots still baffle her. “I only recently learned what an ox was—a castrated bull. It is! Didn’t you think it was a whole other species? I did. There are all these different sorts of beasts of burden. Donkey and mule are strange. Cow and the various permutations of cow and ox and bull gets into a whole thing. Oh, and then there’s *steer*! Don’t throw steer into this mix, because then I’m going to have to, like, never leave New York.”

Franzen is himself a humorist of great gifts; his story collection “Hearing from Wayne,” particularly “37 Years,” is still taught in classes on comic writing. But, for the past twenty-five years, he has devoted himself chiefly to raising a family, and preparing the Halloween spectacle. (Many young people who grew up in central Connecticut remember driving long distances to stand in line to see it on Halloween night.) “And the weird thing is that he works on it for weeks, but he keeps it up for just eight hours,” Chast says.

The excitement of the approaching display has penetrated even Dimitri’s Diner, where the manager demands instantly to know how Franzen’s work is going. (Like a star soprano, Franzen threatens every year to retire from the display, and never does.) A little later, after grilled cheese, Chast takes the visitor on a tour of the staging area. “Santa’s workshop,” she calls it. One might expect inflatable witches or grinning jack-o’-lanterns; in fact, the Franzen-Chast holiday display is much spookier and more original, like a particularly grim series of Cornell boxes. It features hundreds of ancient baby dolls—specially selected for their strange, “uncanny valley” grimaces and grins—positioned menacingly in a hospital-ward setting, and brightly, morbidly lit. To add to the creepiness, Franzen hangs skeletons along the street. “The whole street closes down, and thousands of people come around,” Chast explains. “Bill is in his element.”

Although she pined for Manhattan in her early Connecticut years, Chast heartily affirms that it was a great place to raise her children. The relation of parents and children, she now thinks in



maturity, is a central theme of her work. The composition and publication of “Can’t We Talk” happened to overlap with her younger child’s coming out as trans. It was an event that Chast treated with what her friends describe as unperturbed equanimity. “Pete’s the same person,” Chast says, of her child. “I think in some ways I was very lucky. We always had a good relationship—I hope! It sounds like a joke, but I mean it: if my child had become a Republican? A Trump voter? *That* would have been hard to fully accept—seriously!”

“It’s been interesting. It’s not the only thing about him, and it’s not even among the most important. Everybody should get to define themselves as they feel. It’s hard enough to figure out who you are, and what drives you, without having somebody tell you, ‘You know what you’re feeling? It’s really invalid!’”

Touring the grounds of Franzen’s Halloween display, one senses in Chast a slightly baffled unease, familiar to all married people contemplating their spouse’s singular obsession. Back inside the cozy, handsome house, one finds at last the essential Chast, the Roz rosebud, in the form of two fine and carefully kept collections of books. One, in a bedroom upstairs, is made up of three hundred volumes by *New Yorker* cartoonists, going all the way back to the earliest strata. “I’ve admired Mary Petty forever,” she says, as she shares an ancient book by that early, inimitable cartoonist. She has vintage Steig, early Helen Hokinson, and, of course, all of Charles Addams.

She holds an equally impressive collection of contemporary graphic novelists and alternative artists, including a near-full run of the works of Derf Backderf, whose study of a young serial killer, “My Friend Dahmer,” was adapted into a movie. (Chast likes the book so much she buys it for friends.) One realizes that what this collection illustrates is, to use a phrase she would hate, Chast’s historical role: to reconcile the sophisticated, specific-minded humor of *The New Yorker* with the gawky, confessional truth-telling and boundary-crossing of graphic forms. Her work belongs to both styles. She’s a Klutzy Konfessionalist with an ever-longer-breathed narrative drive, propelling toward unexpected horizons and



“I’m turning into my mother.”

subjects. Her next book, she says, will be about dreams, a subject that has always fascinated her: “I’m interested in how dreams are both ridiculous and serious, at the same time.”

Walking home one night after dinner at a West Side Chinese restaurant, a couple of friends look back to see Chast at work with her smartphone, taking pictures of something on the darkened sidewalk. She often casts her eyes down, but this is less modesty than attunement to the street life beneath her feet.

“Bill would say that this has a lot to do with the fact that I grew up in Brooklyn at a time when New York was a little rougher,” she says, contemplating her own sidewalk contemplations. “My parents trained me to never look at people directly. Never look anyone in the eye!” She laughs. “I think I got kind of good at being warily aware of my surroundings. They taught me to look at everyone as if I was looking at something else. So, I look away, but carefully. The idea of being in headphones and in my own world—that’s not in my world. I like being aware of what’s around you.”

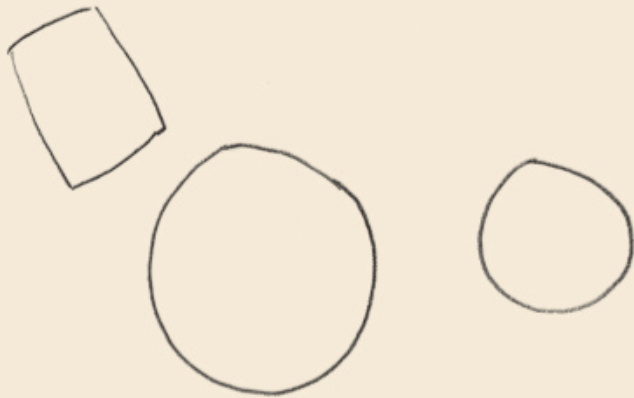
Drawing closer, one sees that what

she is inspecting is . . . a fire hydrant. This in itself is not so unusual. Fire hydrants and standpipes occupy a special, warm place in the Chast imagination. (“I think they’re very anthropomorphic. I think of them as the flora and fauna of New York—flora more than fauna. They’re sort of where hedges would be. The standpipes are like hedges, and the hydrants are like city grass.”) She has spotted what is evident to her eye, but what anyone else would have walked right by: the upright “masculine” shape of the hydrant has somehow cast an entirely “feminine” shape on the sidewalk—a shape that looks like a prehistoric fertility figure, a Venus of Willendorf.

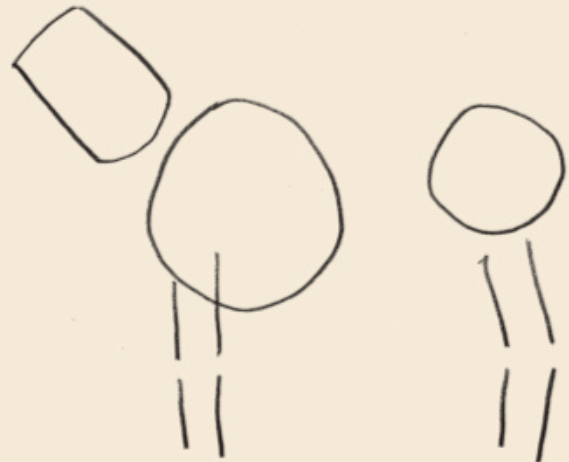
“I have to *do* something with this,” she whispers. She has, once again, Chastized the world around her, finding an image of startling sexual complementaries—or is it dubious gender battle?—on an Upper West Side street. A confrontation of male and female, mediated by a New York fire hydrant, that would have gone unseen had she not seen it. It is, one realizes, a dream image in her sense, at once absurd and significant. Later, she posts it on her Instagram account, with a simple caption: “Tonight: male hydrant with female shadow.” ♦

How to Draw a Horse

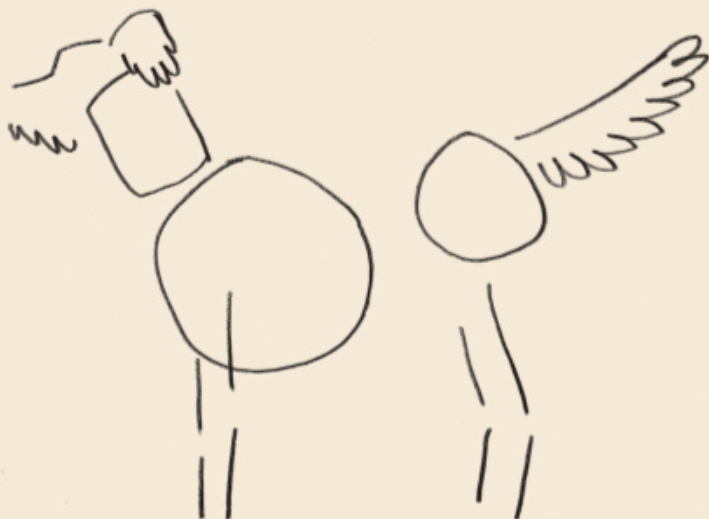
1. Start with three shapes to form the neck, shoulders, and rump.



2. Using eight lines, plot out where the legs will be.



3. Next, add a fluffy tail, ears, and a furry snout.



4. PSYCH! That's a dog. You think you can learn to draw a horse just like that?



Horses are a known enemy of artists.



It's not that artists hate horses. Horses are so uniquely and unexpectedly proportioned that it's hard for artists to become familiar with them.



To learn to draw horses, you can't just want to draw them; you must NEED to draw them.



For me, in seventh grade, drawing horses became a true necessity.



I became intensely and unceasingly obsessed with one of my classmates.



And I didn't know anything about her. Except that she liked horses.



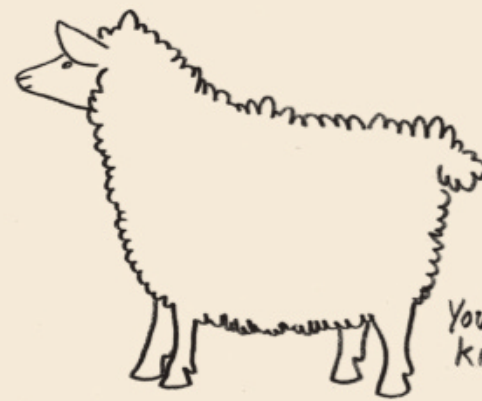
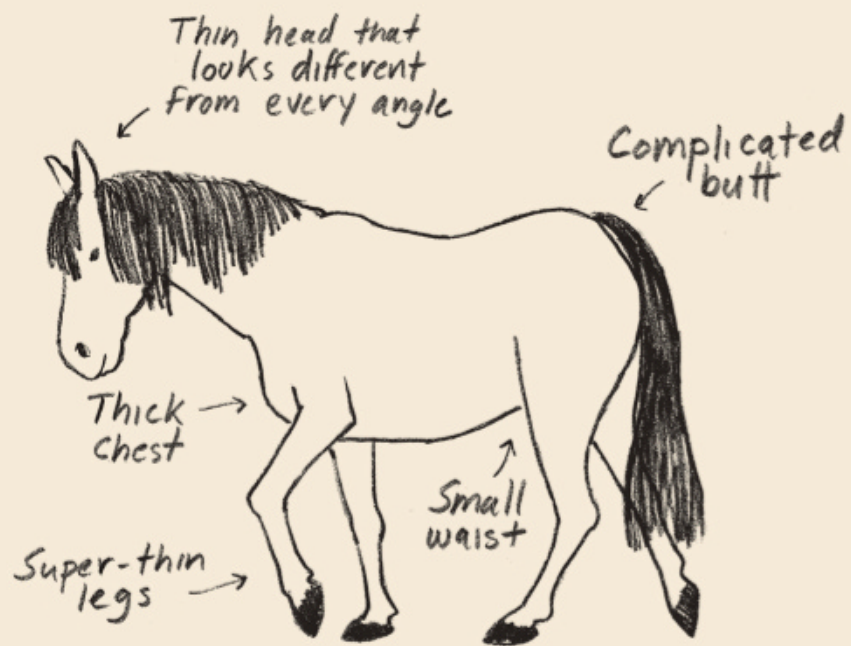
THE BODY

Horses' bodies are not intuitive to a budding artist the way other animals' bodies might be.



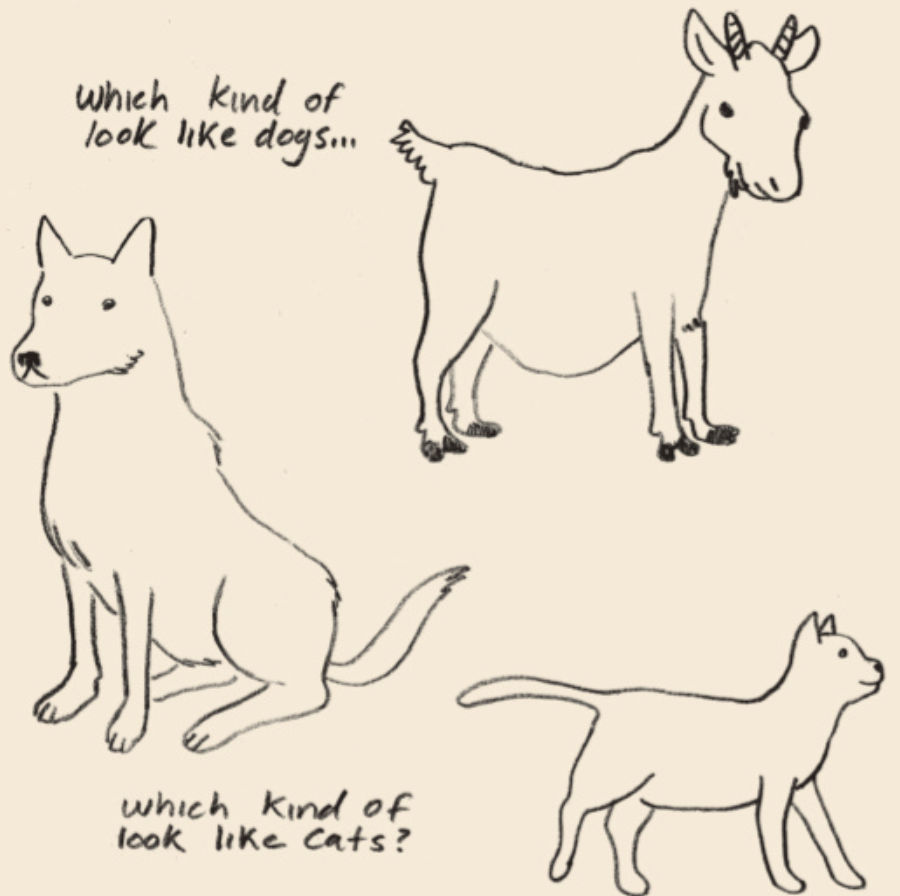
Drawing superheroes, anthropomorphic dragons, and bootleg Pokémon did not prepare me for the body of a horse.





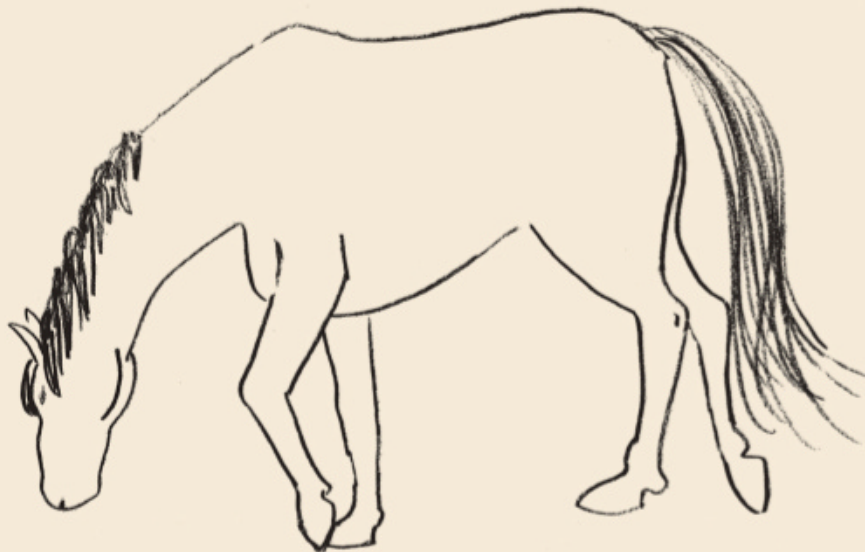
You know how sheep kind of look like goats...

Which kind of look like dogs...



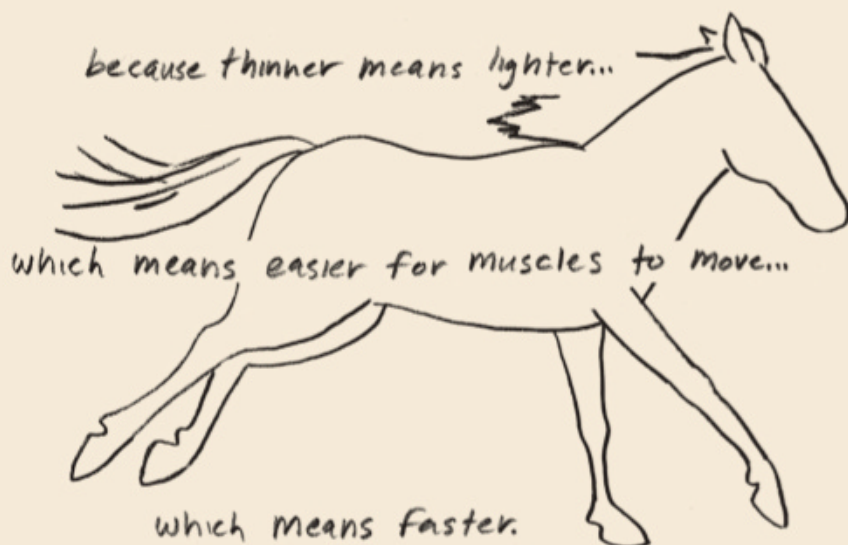
Which kind of look like cats?

But not horses. They are different.



Their legs are thinner and longer than you'd expect them to be...

Their torsos seem enormous compared with those legs—like they are too big to be held by such small things.



But horses are perfectly designed to carry their own weight.

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site

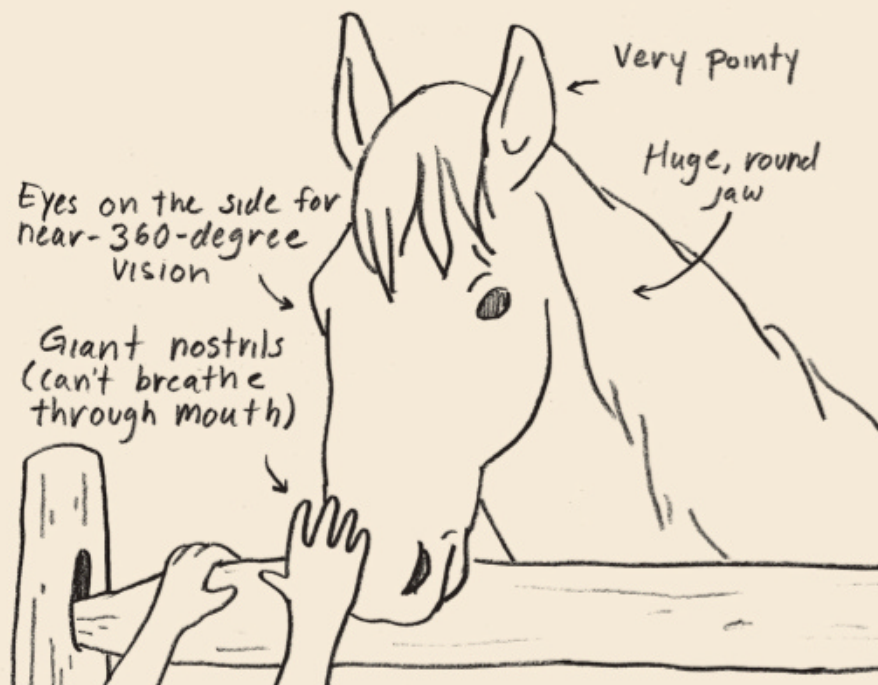


AVXLIVE.icu

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

The head is also complex.



I am small compared with a horse.



But, I am told, that will soon change.



I am resistant to the change.



Life up until now has not been complicated.



But now...



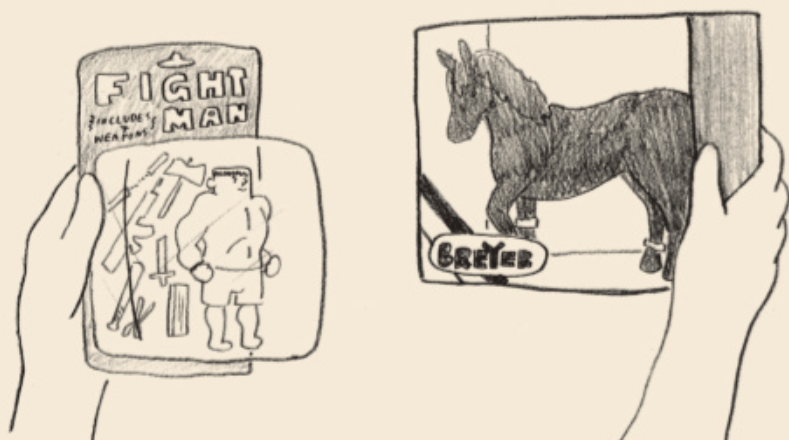
I maximize the horse media in my life: when I get home from school, I watch "Mr. Ed" on TV Land.



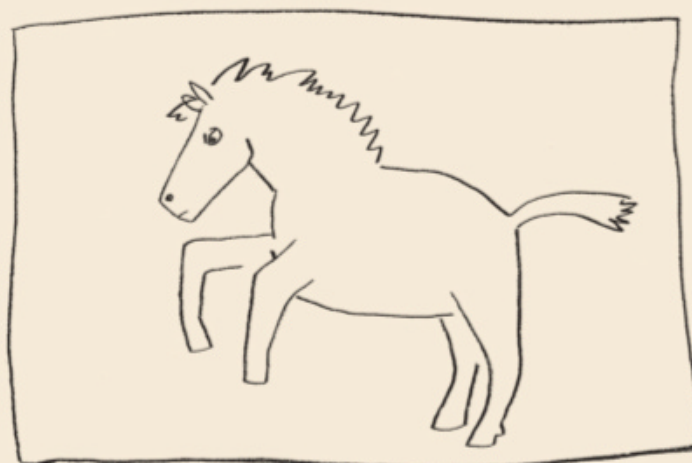
I go through every bookshelf in the house in search of books with horses in or on them.



At the toy store, I pass on my usual highly adjustable action figure for a stiff, brown Breyer horse.

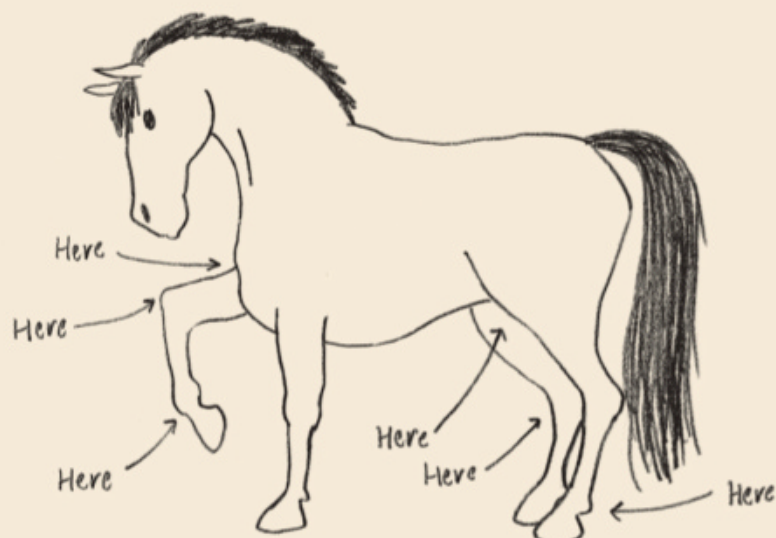


It all ends up helping - my horses are getting there.

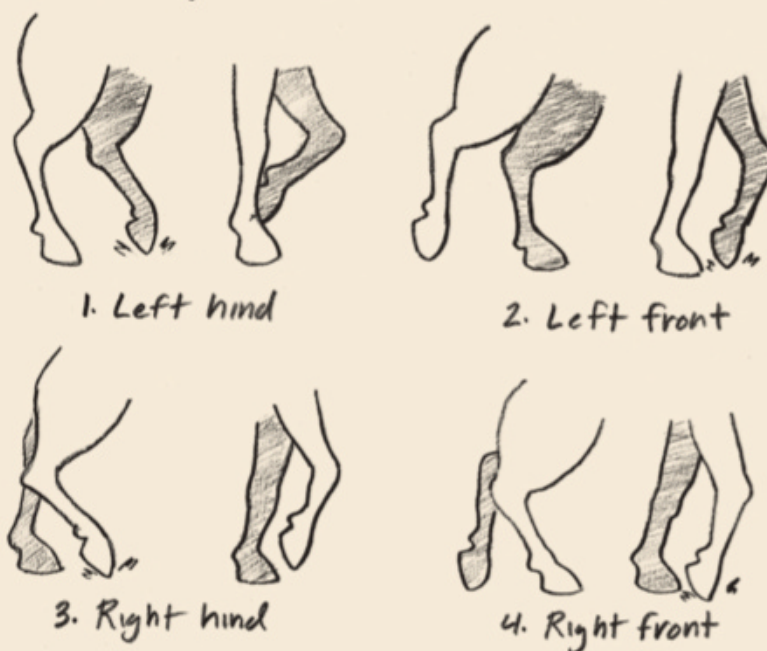


THE MOVEMENT

I think the most important thing I learned was how and where the legs bend.



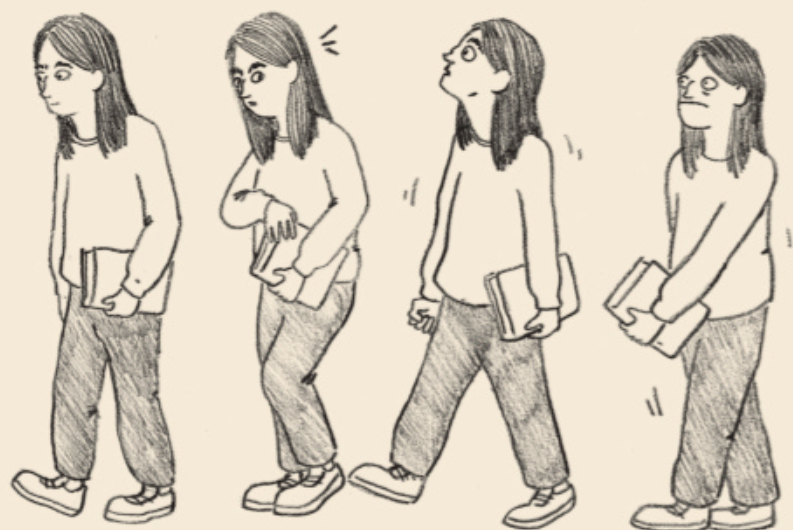
There is a long history of mapping horse gaits. A walk sequence goes:



For a gallop, the fastest a horse can run, the sequence goes:



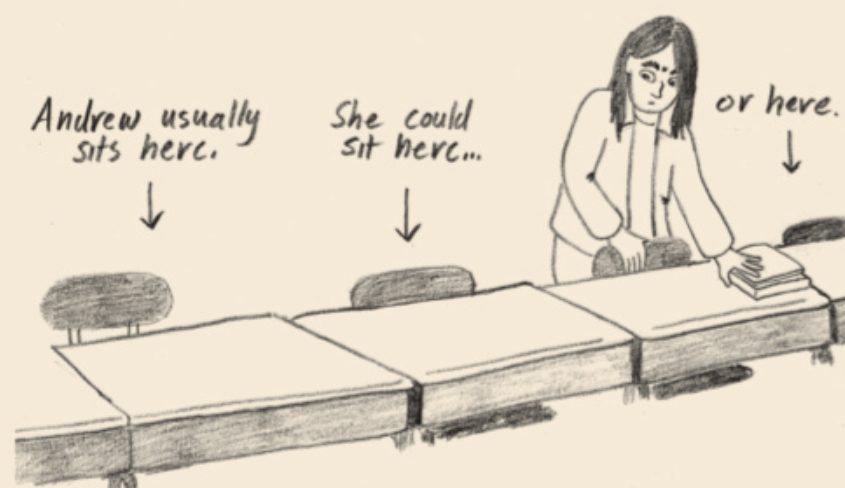
Why do I walk differently if I think she's watching?



Why do I watch her?



Every thing I do is calculated.



One day, she sits next to me.



THE MYSTERY

Something is missing from my horses.
I don't know what.



One day, at a family friend's house, I witness
a horse standing up off the ground.



She is so huge, her legs and neck so long. The act
of simply standing up is so complicated and dramatic.



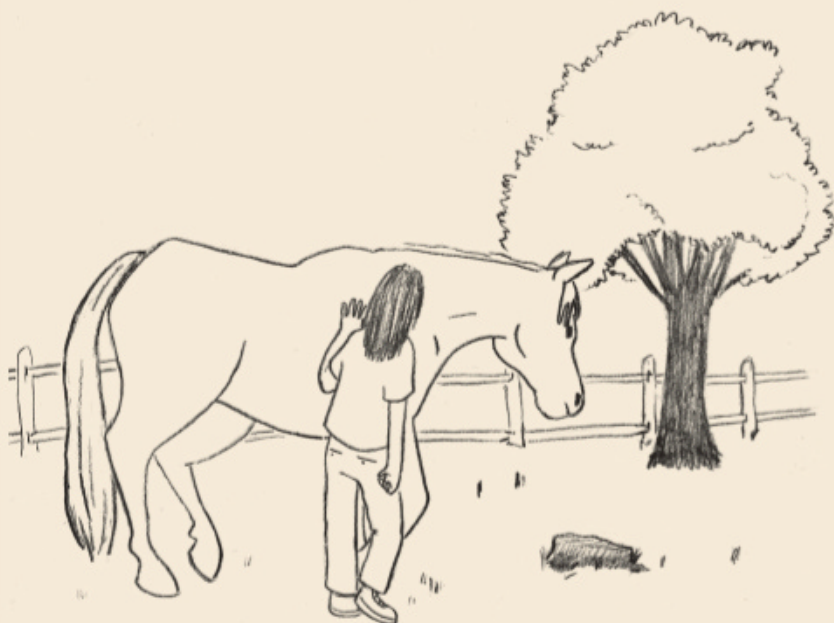
How could I possibly draw it?



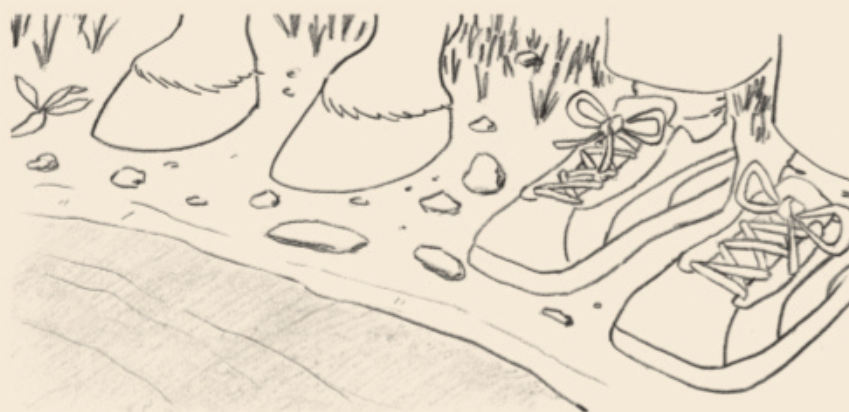
Horses are so big but so nervous.



Powerful and fragile.



Did you know that horses dislike stepping in puddles? It's because they can't tell how deep they are, and they fear they'll break a leg.



Does every horse have to learn this?
Or are they born knowing?



How do you learn what a feeling means?



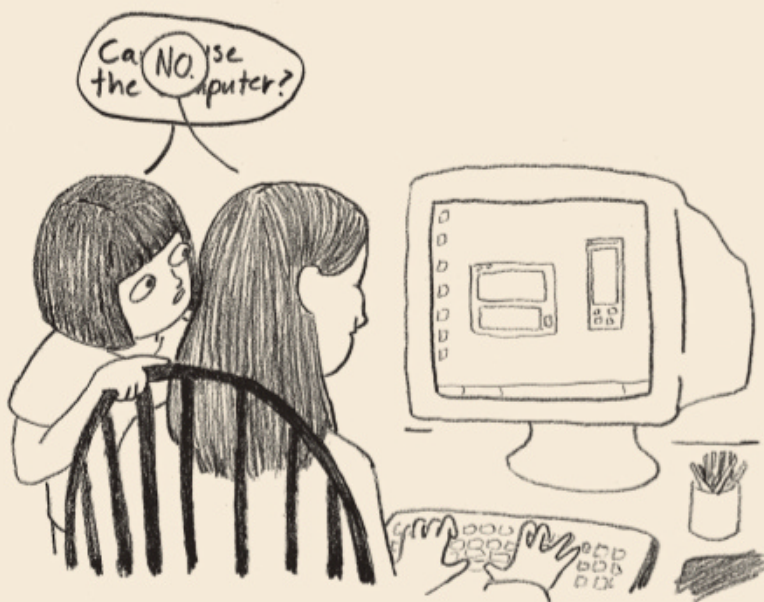
She noticed me.



We walk to class together.



We chat online after school.



Sometimes we even talk on the phone so we can cheat at online Pictionary.



There is something I want, but I don't know what it is.



Is it to be her best friend? She has a best friend; every day in sixth grade, they wore matching Abercrombie T-shirts. Is that what I want?



I have best friends, though.



And when I listen to music I don't imagine myself rescuing them from a fire.

I can't think it.

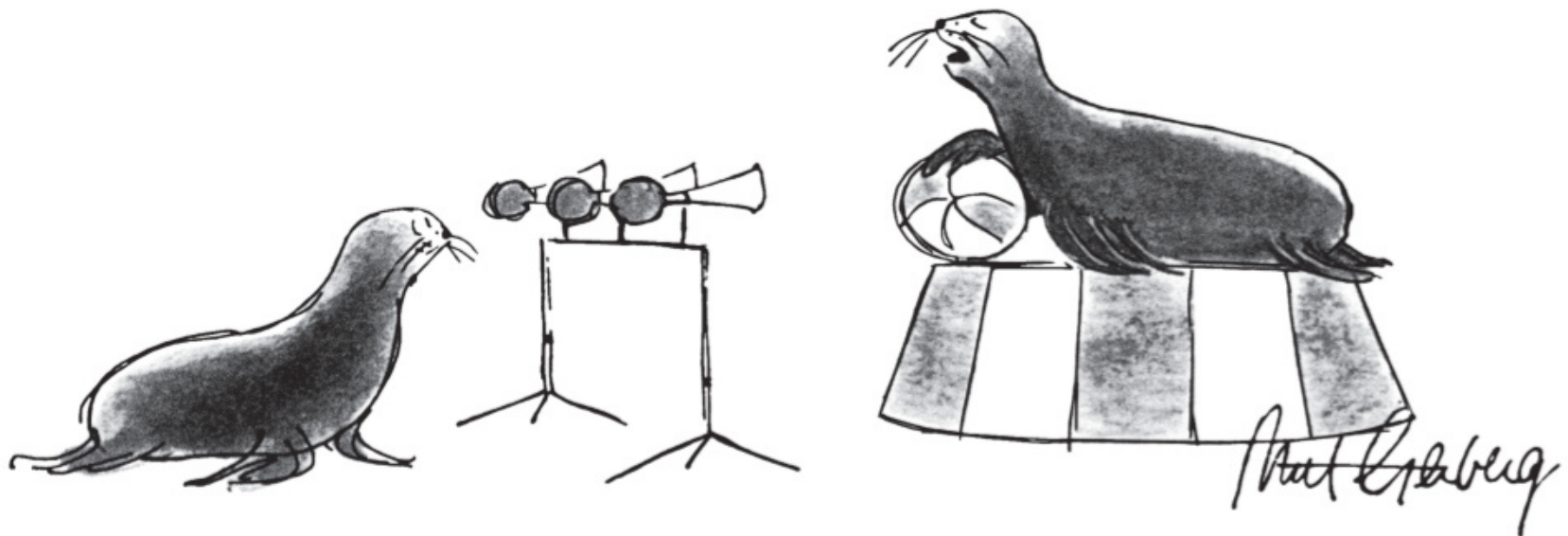


There is a word I know. But I can't say it.



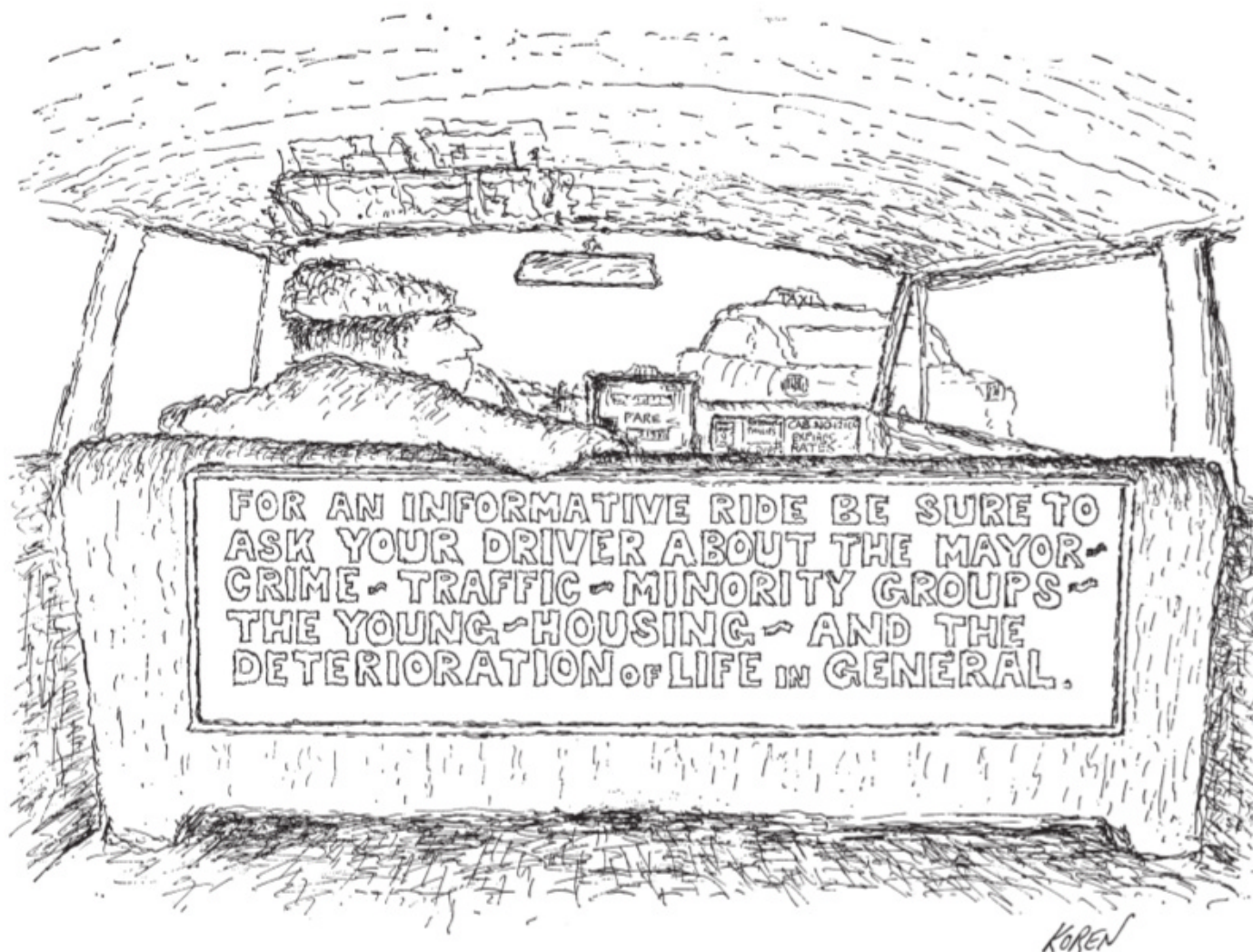
I'll just keep drawing horses.





"Of course, what I'd really like to do is direct."

SELECTED BY STEVE MARTIN

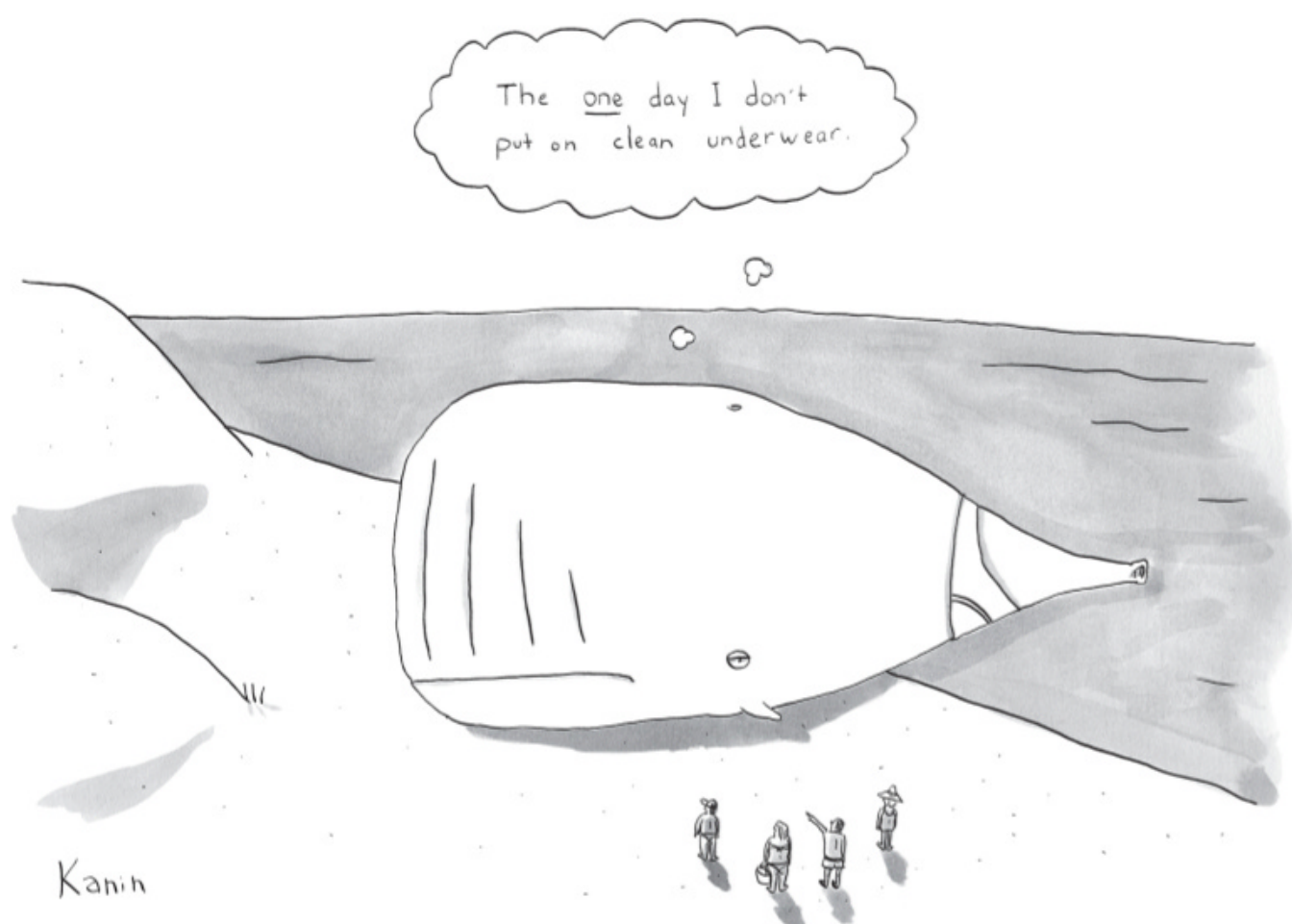


SELECTED BY LARRY DAVID



"Why didn't you bring a cardigan or a lightweight jacket?"

SELECTED BY **MINDY KALING**

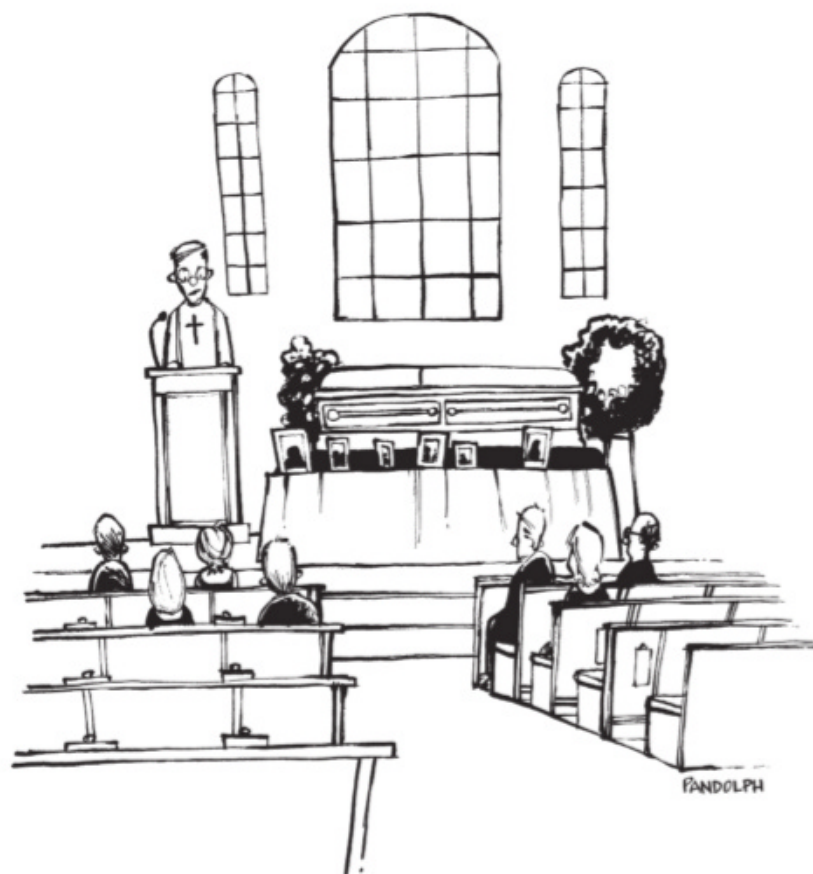


SELECTED BY **SETH MEYERS**



"I used to be in advertising. Remember 'Buy this, you morons'? That was mine."

SELECTED BY JON HAMM



"Today's service will be using the hashtag #Jerrysdead."

SELECTED BY HASAN MINHAJ



THE SUBTEXT OF ALL TATTOOS

Lewis

SELECTED BY SARAH SILVERMAN



“Well, the down payment has cleared and the paperwork is filed—as soon as you pee on the lawn, the place is yours.”

SELECTED BY **JUDD APATOW**



“Sometimes the future is bright, sometimes it’s dark—it’s all cyclical.”

SELECTED BY **TAVI GEVINSON**



SELECTED BY **ROGER ANGELL**



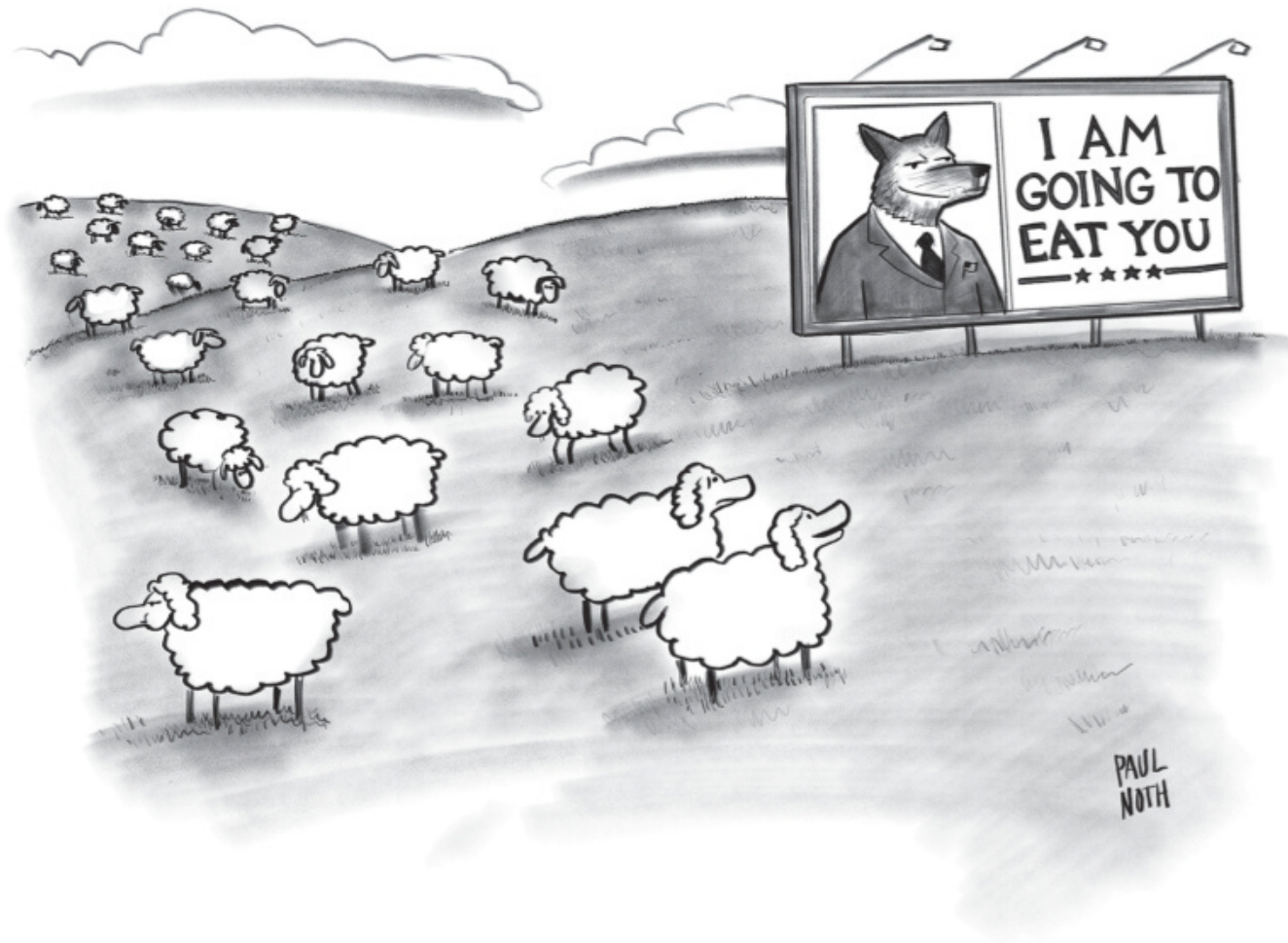
"They're marinated in hot water for six hours."

SELECTED BY **PADMA LAKSHMI**



"It's your ribs. I'm afraid they're delicious."

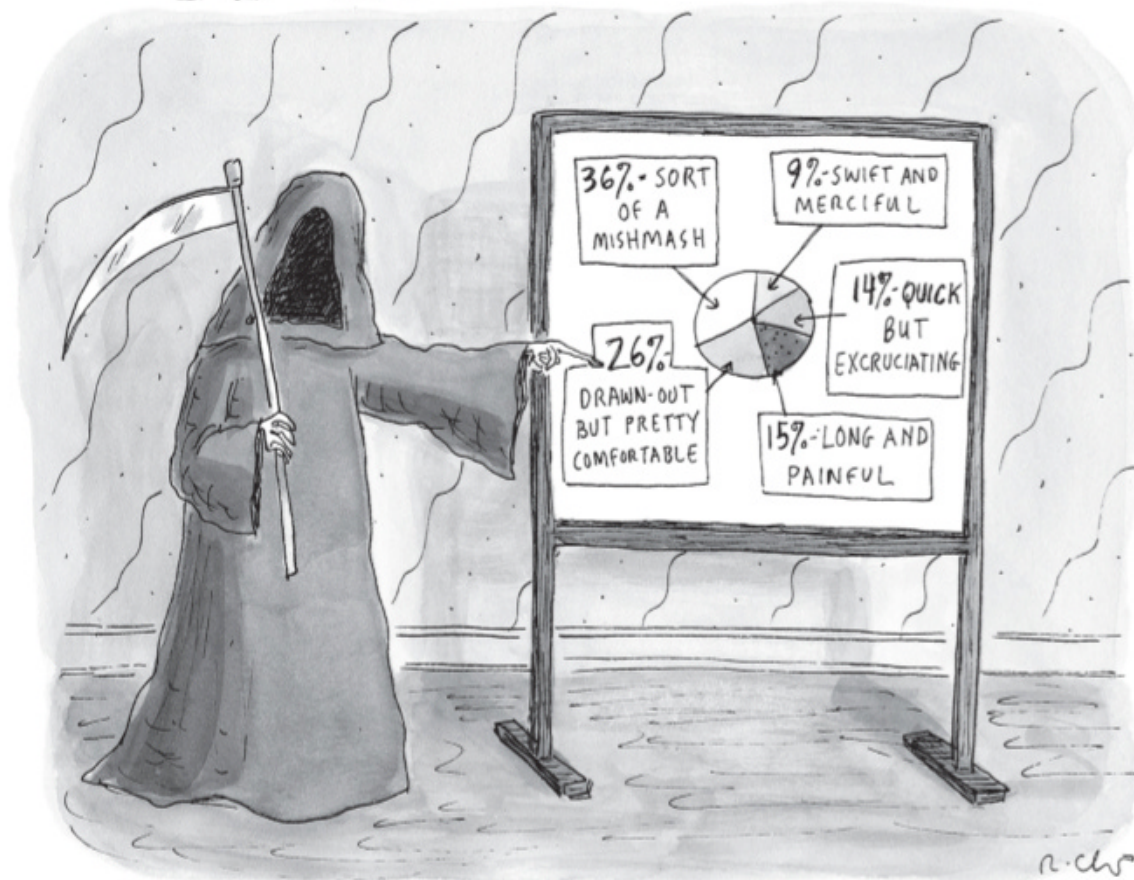
SELECTED BY **INA GARTEN**



"He tells it like it is."

SELECTED BY **TA-NEHISI COATES**

A LOOK AHEAD

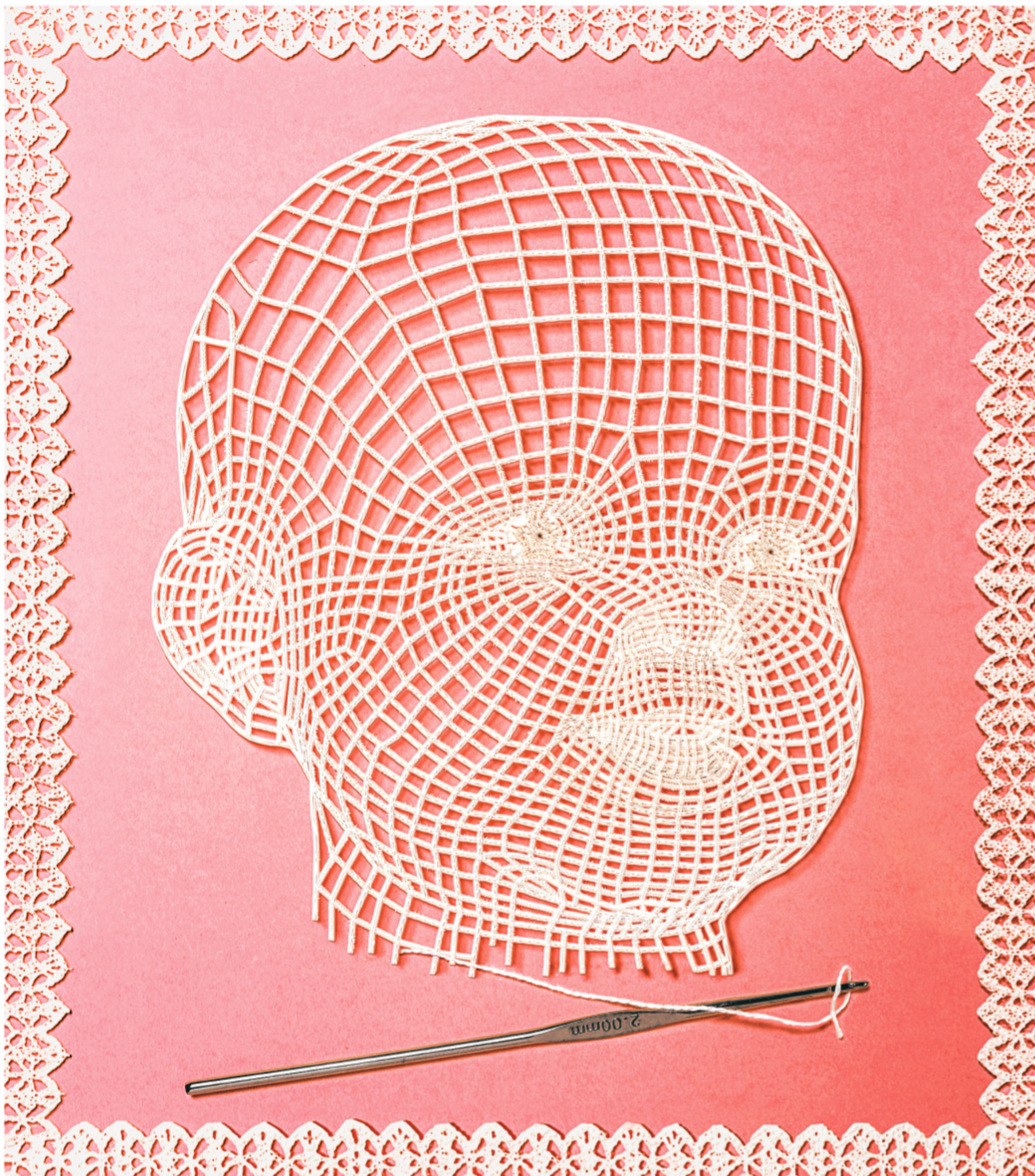


SELECTED BY **TERRY GROSS**

FICTION JUNE 21 & 28, 1999

I CAN SPEAK!™

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



Mrs. Ruth Faniglia
210 Lester Street
Rochester, N.Y. 14623

Dear Mrs. Faniglia,
We were very sorry to receive your letter of 23 Feb., which accompanied the I CAN SPEAK!™ you returned, much to our disappointment. We here at KidLuv believe that the I CAN SPEAK!™ is an innovative and essential educational tool that, used with proper parental guidance, offers a rare early-development opportunity for babies and toddlers alike. And so I thought I would take some of my personal time (I am on lunch) and try to address the questions you raised in your letter, which is here in front of me on my (cluttered!) desk.

First, may I be so bold as to suggest that your disappointment may stem from your own, perhaps unreasonable, expectations? Because in your letter, what you indicated, when I read it, was that you think and/or thought that somehow the product can read your baby's mind? Our product cannot read your baby's mind, Mrs. Faniglia. No one can read a baby's mind, at least not yet. Although believe me, we are probably working on it! All the I CAN SPEAK!™ can do, however, is respond to aural patterns in a way that makes baby seem older. Say baby sees a peach. If you or Mr. Faniglia (I hope I do not presume) were to loudly say something like "What a delicious peach!" the I CAN SPEAK!™, hearing this, through that little slotted hole near the neck, would respond by saying something like "I LIKE PEACH." Or "I WANT PEACH." Or, if you had chosen the ICS2000 (you chose the ICS1900, which is fine, perfectly good for most babies), the I CAN SPEAK!™ might even respond by saying something like "FRUIT, ISN'T THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR FOOD GROUPS?" Which would be pretty good, for a six-month-old like Derek, your son, don't you think?

But here I must reiterate: That would not in reality be Derek speaking. Derek would not in reality know that a peach is fruit, or that fruit is a major food group. The I CAN SPEAK!™ knows, however, and, from its position on Derek's face, it will give the illusion

that Derek knows, by giving the illusion that Derek is speaking out of the twin moving SimuLips. But that is it. That is all we claim.

Furthermore, in your letter, Mrs. Faniglia, you state that the I CAN SPEAK!™ "mask" (your terminology) takes on a "stressed-out look when talking that is not what a real baby's talking face appears like but is more like some nervous middle-aged woman." Well, maybe that is so, but, with all due respect, you try it! You try making a latex face look and talk and move like the real face of an actual live baby! Inside are over 5000 separate circuits and 390 moving parts. And as far as looking like a middle-aged woman, we beg to differ: we do not feel that a middle-aged stressed-out woman has (1) no hair on head and (2) chubby cheeks and (3) fine downy facial hair. The ICS1900 unit is definitely the face of a baby, Mrs. Faniglia. We took over twenty-five hundred photos of different babies and using a computer combined them to make this face, this face we call Male Composite 37 or, affectionately, Little Roger. But what you possibly seem to be unhappy about is that Little Roger's face is not Derek's face? To be frank, Mrs. Faniglia, many of you, our customers, have found it disconcerting that their baby looks different with the I CAN SPEAK!™ on. Which we find so surprising. Did you, we often wonder, not look at the cover of the box? On that cover the ICS1900 is very plainly shown, situated on a sort of rack, looking face-wise like Little Roger, albeit Little Roger is a bit crumpled and has a forehead furrow of sorts.

But this is why we came up with the ICS2100. With the ICS2100, your baby looks just like your baby. And, because we do not want anyone to be unhappy with us, we would like to give you a complimentary ICS2100 upgrade! We would like to come to your house on Lester Street and make a personalized plaster cast of Derek's real, actual face! And soon, via FedEx, here will come Derek's face in a box, and when you slip that ICS2100 over Derek's head and Velcro the Velcro, he will look so very much like himself! Plus we have another free surprise, which is that, while at your house, we

will tape his actual voice and use it to make our phrases, the phrases Derek will subsequently say. So not only will he look like himself, he will sound like himself, as he crawls around your house appearing to speak!

Plus we will throw in several other personalizing options. Say you call Derek "Lovemeister." (I am using this example from my own personal home, as my wife, Ann, and I call our son Billy "Lovemeister," because he is so sweet.) With the ICS2100, you might choose to have Derek say, upon crawling into a room, "HERE COMES THE LOVEMEISTER!" or "STOP TALKING DIRTY, THE LOVEMEISTER HAS ARRIVED!" How we do this is, laser beams coming out of the earlobes, which sense the doorframe. So the I CAN SPEAK!™ knows it has just entered a room, from its position on Derek's head! And also you will have over one hundred Discretionary Phrases to more highly personalize Derek. For instance, you might choose to have him say, on his birthday, "MOMMY AND DADDY, REMEMBER THAT TIME YOU CONCEIVED ME IN ARUBA?" Although probably you did not in fact conceive Derek in Aruba. That we do not know. (Our research is not that extensive!) Or say your dog comes up and gives Derek a lick? You could make Derek say (if your dog's name is Queenie), "QUEENIE, GIVE IT A REST!" Which, you know what? It makes you love him more. Because suddenly he is articulate. Suddenly he is not just sitting there going glub glub glub while examining a piece of his own feces on his own thumb, which is something we recently found Billy doing! Sometimes we have felt that our childless friends think badly of us for having a kid who just goes glub glub glub in the corner while looking at his feces on his thumb. But now when childless friends are over, what we have found, my wife, Ann, and I, is that it's great to have your kid say something witty and self-possessed years before he or she would actually in reality be able to say something witty or self-possessed. The bottom line is that it's just *fun* when you and your childless friends are playing cards, and your baby suddenly blurts out (in his *very own probable future voice*), "IT IS LIKELY

THAT WE STILL DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND THE IMPORT OF ALL OF EINSTEIN'S FINDINGS!"

Here I must admit that we have several times seen a sort of softening in the eyes of our resolute childless friends, as if they, too, would suddenly like to have a baby.

And as far as Derek flinching whenever that voice issues forth from him? When that speaker near his mouth sort of buzzes his lips? May I say this is not unusual? What I suggest? Try putting the ICS on Derek for a short time at first, maybe ten minutes a day, then gradually building up his Wearing Time. That is what we did. And it worked super. Now Billy wears his even while sleeping. In fact, if we forget to put it back on after his bath, he pitches a fit. Kind of begs for it! He starts to say, you know, "Mak! Mak!" Which we think is his word for mask. And when we put the mask on and Velcro the Velcro, he says, or rather it says, "GUTEN MORGEN, PAPA!" because we are trying to teach him German, and have installed the German Learning module in our ICS2100. Or for example, if his pants are not yet on, he'll say, "HOW ABOUT SLAPPING ON MY ROMPERS SO I CAN GET ON WITH MY DAY!" (I wrote that one.)

My point is, with the ICS2100 Billy is much, much cleverer than he ever was with the ICS1900. He has recently learned, for example, that if he spills a little milk on his chin, his SimuLips will issue a MOO sound. Which he really seems to get a kick out of! I'll be in the living room doing a little evening paperwork and from the kitchen I'll hear, you know, "MOO! MOO! MOO!" And I'll rush in, and there'll be this sort of lake of milk on the floor. And there'll be Billy, pouring milk on his chin until I yank the milk away, at which point he bellows, "DON'T FENCE ME IN." (Ann's contribution—she was raised in Wyoming!)

I, for one, Mrs. Faniglia, do not believe that any baby wants to sit around all day going glub glub glub. My feeling is that a baby, sitting in its diaper, looking around at the world, thinks to itself, albeit in some crude nonverbal way, What the heck is wrong with me, why am I the only one going glub glub glub while all these other folks are

talking in whole complete sentences? And hence, possibly, lifelong psychological damage may result. Now, am I saying that your Derek runs the risk of feeling bad about himself as a grownup because as a baby he felt he didn't know how to talk right? No, it is not for me to say that, Mrs. Faniglia, I am only in Sales. But I will say that I am certainly not taking any chances with our Billy. My belief is that when Billy hears a competent, intelligent voice issuing from the area near his mouth, he feels excellent about himself. And I feel excellent about him. Not that I didn't feel excellent about him before. But now we can actually have a sort of conversation! And also—and most importantly—when that voice issues from his SimuLips he learns something invaluable; namely, that when he finally does begin speaking, he will be speaking via using his mouth.

Now, Mrs. Faniglia, you may be thinking, Hold on a sec, of course this guy loves his I CAN SPEAK!™ He probably gets his for free! But not so, Mrs. Faniglia, I get mine for two grand, just like you. We get no discounts, so much in demand is the I CAN SPEAK!™, and in addition we are strongly encouraged by our management to purchase and use the I CAN SPEAK!™ at home, on our own kids. (Or even, in one case, on an elderly senile mom! Suffice it to say that, though she looks sort of funny with the Little Roger head on her somewhat frail frame, the family takes great comfort in hearing all the witty things she has to say. Just like her old self!) Not that I wouldn't use it otherwise. Believe me, I would. Since we upgraded to the ICS2100, things have been great, Billy looks almost identical to himself, and is not nearly so, you know, boring as before, when we had the ICS1900, which (frankly) says some rather predictable things, which I expect is partly why you were so unhappy with it, Mrs. Faniglia, you seem like a very intelligent woman. When people come over now, sometimes we just gather around Billy and wait for his next howler, and last weekend my supervisor, Mr. Ted Ames, stopped by (a super guy, he has really given me support, please let him know if you've found this letter at all helpful) and boy did we all crack up laughing when Billy

began rubbing his face very rapidly across the carpet in order to make his ICS2100 shout, "FRICTION IS A COMMON AND USEFUL SOURCE OF HEAT!"

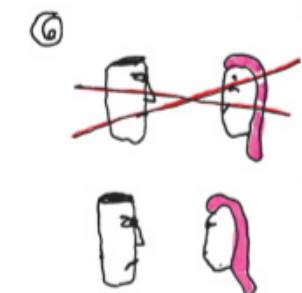
Mrs. Faniglia, it is nearing the end of my lunch, and so I must wrap this up, but I hope I have been of service. On a personal note, I did not have the greatest of pasts when I came here, having been in a few scrapes and even rehab situations, but now, wow, the commissions roll in, and I have made a nice life for me and Ann and Billy. Not that the possible loss of my commission is the reason for my concern. Please do not think so. While it is true that, if you decline my upgrade offer and persist in your desire to return your ICS1900, my commission must be refunded, by me, to Mr. Ames, it is no big deal, I have certainly refunded commissions to Mr. Ames before, especially lately. I don't quite know what I'm doing wrong. But that is not your concern, Mrs. Faniglia. Your concern is Derek. My real reason for writing this letter, on my lunch break, is that, hard as we all work at KidLuv to provide innovative and essential development tools for families like yours, Mrs. Faniglia, it is always sort of a heartbreak when our products are misapprehended. Please do accept our offer of a free ICS2100 upgrade. We at KidLuv really love what kids are, Mrs. Faniglia, which is why we want them to become something better as soon as possible! Baby's early years are so precious, and must not be wasted, as we are finding out, as our Billy grows and grows, learning new skills every day.

Sincerely yours,
Rick Sminks
Product Service Representative
KidLuv, Inc. ♦

Prose Passages We Hated to Come to the End Of

From the Times Literary Supplement.

But the eat-your-greens approach to literature ends up drawing new borders around an activity that is woven into the fabric of even the most insular life. One of the show's clever moves is to rescue translation from its worthy perch by revealing it at work everywhere: nuns do it, kings do it, children between home and school do it like breathing. It is not broccoli, but air and water.



HAMMURABI'S CODE of MANNERS

- 1 BE SHARP WITH A SHARP PERSON.
- 2 BE RUDE TO A RUDE PERSON.
- 3 BE BLUNT WITH A BLUNT PERSON.
- 4 IF SOMEONE CUTS YOU IN LINE, CUT HIM BACK.
- 5 IF A MANSPREADER TAKES HALF YOUR SEAT ON THE SUBWAY, CONGRATULATIONS, HIS LEG IS NOW YOUR ARMREST.
- 6 IF A SOUR PERSON TRIES TO STARE YOU DOWN, DO NOT SMILE INGRATIATINGLY AT HIM. STARE BACK.
- 7 DO NOT APOLOGIZE FOR YOUR UNINTENDED REACTION TO ANOTHER'S RUDENESS.
- 8 MEET AGGRESSION WITH REFUSAL. MEET PASSIVE AGGRESSION WITH FEIGNED OBLIVIOUSNESS.
- 9 IF YOUR ROOMMATE LEAVES THE DOOR UNLOCKED, LEAVE THE DOOR SWINGING OPEN.
- 10 ANSWER VAGUENESS WITH VAGUENESS.
- 11 IDENTIFY YOUR FRIENDS WHO ARE NEEDY. YOU MUST WITHHOLD FROM THESE FRIENDS.
- 12 IF SOMEONE LEANS AGAINST YOU AS IF YOU WERE A WALL, AND IF THIS PERSON IS IN HIS RIGHT MIND, QUIETLY MARK HIS SHIRT WITH YOUR PEN. HE'LL BE SORRY.
- 13 IF YOUR ROMANTIC PARTNER STARTS TAKING YOU FOR GRANTED, FEIGN DISINTEREST OR CALLOUSNESS.
- 14 IF YOUR FRIEND PUSHES YOU TO COME TO HER GROUP SHOW, PUSH HER TO COME TO YOUR BOOK SIGNING, BUT NOT RIGHT AWAY.
- 15 WHEN FACED WITH FALSE POLITENESS, OFFER FALSE GRATITUDE.
- 16 TO THE CONVENIENTLY SPACEY PERSON, BE DENSELY PUSHY.
- 17 NEVER RAISE YOUR VOICE IN ANGER. (YOU CAN ALWAYS LEAVE A VERY SLIGHTLY BAD REVIEW.)



FICTION APRIL 5, 2004

SUPER GOAT MAN

BY JONATHAN LETHEM



When Super Goat Man moved into the commune on our street, I was ten years old. Though I liked superheroes, I wasn't familiar with Super Goat Man. His presence didn't mean much to me or to the other kids in the neighborhood. For us, as we ran and screamed and played our secret games on the sidewalk, Super Goat Man was only another of the guys who sat on stoops in sleeveless undershirts on hot summer days, watching the slow progress of life on the block. The two little fleshy horns on his forehead didn't make him especially interesting. We weren't struck by his fall from grace, out of the world of comic-book heroes, among which he had been at best a minor star, to land here in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, in a single room in what was basically a dorm for college dropouts, a hippie group shelter, any more than we were by the tufts of extra hair at his throat and behind his ears. We had eyes only for Spider-Man and Batman in those days, superheroes in two dimensions, with lunchboxes and television shows and theme songs. Super Goat Man had none of those.

It was our dads who cared. They were unmistakably drawn to the strange figure who'd moved to our block, as though for them he represented some lost possibility in their own lives. My father in particular seemed fascinated with Super Goat Man, though he disguised this interest by acting as though it was on my behalf. One day toward the end of that summer, he and I walked to Montague Street to visit the comics shop there. This was a tiny storefront filled with long white boxes packed with carefully archived comics, protected by plastic bags and cardboard backing. The boxes contained ancient runs of back issues of titles I'd heard of, as well as thousands of other comics featuring characters I'd never encountered. The shop was presided over by a nervous young pedant with long hair and a beard, a collector type himself, an old man in spirit who distrusted children in his store, as he ought to have. He helped my father to find what he sought, deep in the alphabetical archive: a five-issue run of *The Remarkable Super Goat Man*, from Electric Comics. These were the only comics

in which Super Goat Man had appeared. There were just five issues because after five the title had been forever cancelled. My father seemed satisfied with what he'd found. We paid for the five issues and left.

I didn't know how to explain to my father that Electric wasn't one of the major comics publishers. The stories the comics contained, when we inspected them together, were both ludicrous and boring. Super Goat Man's five issues showed him rescuing old ladies from swerving trucks and kittens from lightning-struck trees, and battling dull villains like Vest Man and False Dave. The drawings were amateurish, cut-rate, antiquated. I couldn't have articulated these judgments then, of course. I knew only that I disliked the comics, found them embarrassing, for myself, for Super Goat Man, and for my dad. They languished in my room, unread, and were eventually cleaned up—I mean, thrown out—by my mom.

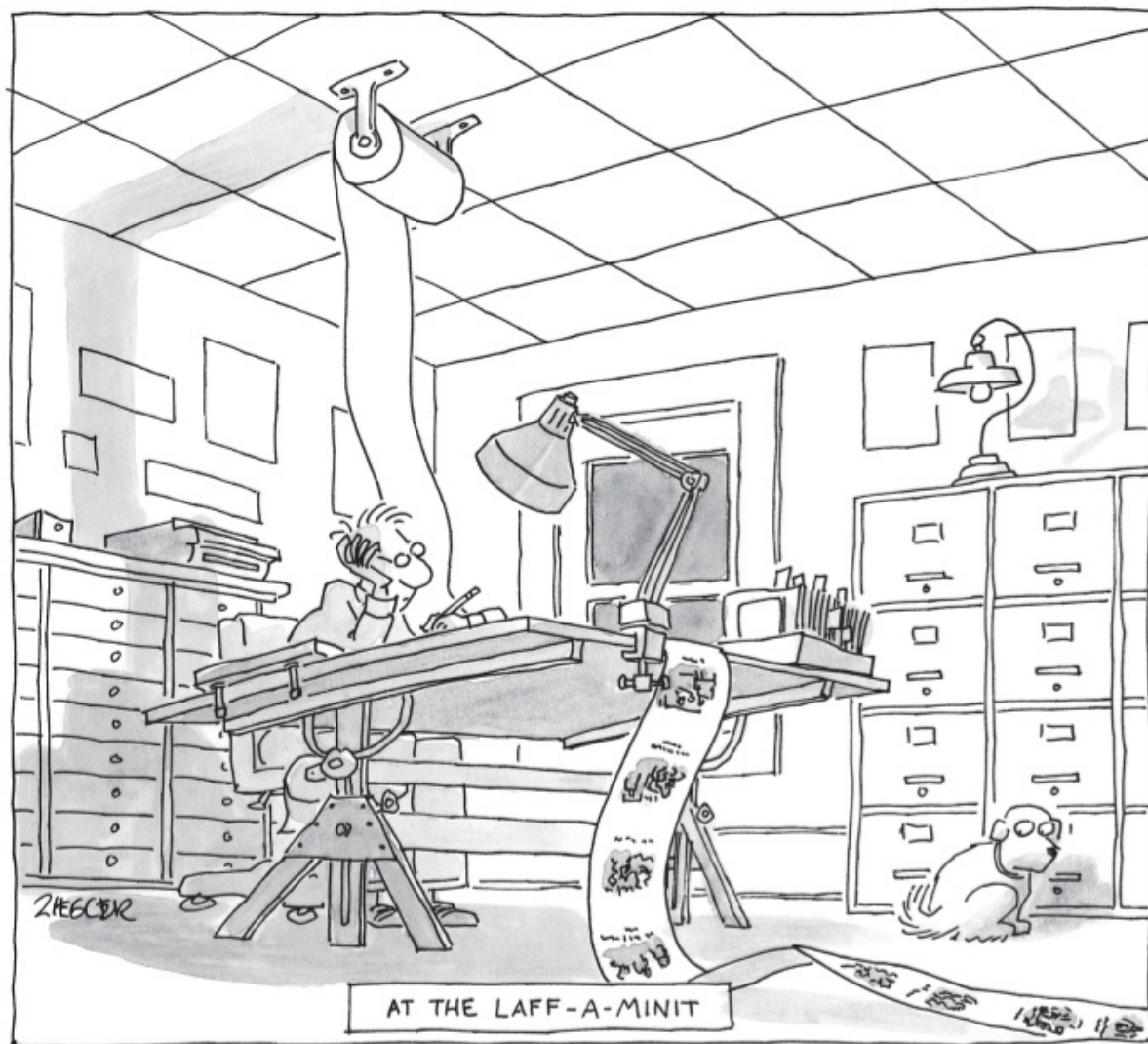
For the next few years, Super Goat Man was less than a minor curiosity to me. I didn't waste thought on him. The younger men and women who lived in the commune took him for granted, as anyone should have, so far as I knew. We kids would see him in their company, moving furniture up the stoop and into the house—discarded dressers and couches and lamps they'd found on the street—or taping up posters on lampposts announcing demonstrations against nuclear power or in favor of day-care centers, or weeding in the commune's pathetic front yard, which was intended as a vegetable garden but was choked not only with uninvited growth but with ice-cream wrappers and soda bottles—we kids used the commune's yard as a dumping ground. It didn't occur to me that Super Goat Man was much older, really, than the commune's other occupants, that in fact they might be closer to my age than to his. However childish their behavior, the hippies all seemed as dull and remote as grownups to me.

It was the summer when I was thirteen that my parents allowed me to accompany them to one of the commune's potluck dinners. The noise and vibrancy of that house's sporadic celebrations were impossible to ignore on our street,

and I knew that my parents had attended a few earlier parties—warily, I imagined. The inhabitants of the commune were always trying to sweep their neighbors into dubious causes, and it might be a mistake to be seduced by frivolity into some sticky association. But my parents liked fun, too. And had too little of it. Their best running jokes concerned the dullness of their friends' dinner parties. This midsummer evening, they brought me along to see inside the life of the scandalous, anomalous house.

The house was already full, many of the guests bearded and jewelled and scruffy, reeking of patchouli and musk, others, like my parents, dressed in their hippest collarless shirts and paisley blouses, wearing their fattest beads and bracelets. The offerings, nearly all casseroles brimming with exotic gray proteins—beans and tofu and eggplant and more I couldn't name—were lined up on a long side table, mostly ignored. This was a version of cocktail hour, with beer drunk from the bottle and well-rolled marijuana cigarettes. I didn't see whether my parents indulged in the latter. My mother accepted a glass of orange juice, surely spiked. I meant not to pay them any attention, so I moved for the stairs. There were partyers leaning on the bannister at the first landing, and music was playing in upstairs rooms, so I didn't doubt that the whole house was open to wandering.

There was no music coming from the garden-facing room on the second floor, but the door was open and three figures were visible inside, seated on cushions on a mattress on the floor: a young couple and Super Goat Man. From his bare hairy feet on the mattress, I guessed that it was his room I'd entered. The walls were sparse apart from a low bookcase, on which I spotted, laid crosswise in the row of upright spines, Norman Mailer's "Armies of the Night," Sergei Eisenstein's "Film Form/The Film Sense," and Thomas Pynchon's "V." The three titles stuck in my head; I would later attempt to read all three in college, succeeding only with the Mailer. Next to the bookcase was a desk heaped with papers, and behind it a few black-and-white postcards had been thumbtacked to the wall. One of the postcard images I recognized as



Charlie Parker, clutching a saxophone with his meaty hands. The jazzman was an idol of my father's, perhaps a symbol of his vanished youth.

The young man on the mattress was holding a book: "Memories, Dreams, Reflections," by Carl Jung. Super Goat Man had evidently just pressed it on him, and had likely been extolling its virtues when I walked into the room.

"Hello," the young woman said, her voice warm. I must have been staring from my place in the middle of the room.

"You're Everett, aren't you?" Super Goat Man said, before I could speak.

"How'd you know my name?"

"You live on the block," Super Goat Man said. "I've seen you running around."

"I think we'll head down, Super Goat Man," the young man said abruptly, tucking the book under his arm as he got up from the mattress. "Get something to eat before it's too late."

"I want to hit the dance floor," the young woman said.

"See you down there," Super Goat Man said. With that, the young couple were gone.

"You checking out the house?" Super

Goat Man said once we were alone. "Casing the joint?"

"I'm looking for my friend," I lied.

"I think some kids are hanging out in the back yard."

"No, she went upstairs." I wanted him to think I had a girlfriend.

"O.K., cool," Super Goat Man said. He smiled. I suppose he was waiting for me to leave, but he didn't give any sign that I was bothering him by staying.

"Why do you live here?" I asked.

"These are my friends," he said. "They helped me out when I lost my job."

"You're not a superhero anymore, are you?"

Super Goat Man shrugged. "Some people felt I was being too outspoken about the war. Anyway, I wanted to accomplish things on a more local level."

"Why don't you have a secret identity?"

"I wasn't that kind of superhero."

"But what was your name before?"

"Ralph Gersten."

"What did Ralph Gersten do?"

"He was a college teacher, for a couple of years."

"So why aren't you Ralph Gersten now?"

"Sometime around when they shot Kennedy I just realized that Ralph Gersten wasn't who I was. He was a part of an old life I was holding on to. So I became Super Goat Man. I've come to understand that this is who I am, for better or worse."

This was a bit much for me to assimilate, so I changed the subject. "Do you smoke pot?"

"Sometimes."

"Were Mr. and Mrs. Gersten sad when you gave up your secret identity?"

"Who?"

"Your parents."

Super Goat Man smiled. "They weren't my real parents. I was adopted."

Suddenly I was done. "I'm going downstairs, Super Goat Man."

"O.K., Everett," he said. "See you down there, probably."

I made my way downstairs to the commune's muddy and ill-lit back yard, milling with the other teen-agers and children stranded there by the throngs of frolickers—for the party was now overflowing its bounds, and we were free to steal beers from the counter and carry on our own tentative party, our own fumbling flirtations. I had no girlfriend, but I did play spin the bottle that night, crouched on the ground beneath a fig tree.

Then, near midnight, I went back inside. The living room was jammed with bodies—dancers on a parquet floor that had been revealed when the vast braided rug was rolled up against the base of the mantelpiece. Colored Christmas lights were bunched in one corner, and some of them blinked to create a gently eerie strobe. I smelled sweat and smoke. Feeling perverse and thrilled by the kisses I'd exchanged in the mud beneath the tree, I meandered into the web of celebrants.

Super Goat Man was there. He was dancing with my mother. She was as I'd never seen her, braceleted wrists crossed above her head, swaying to the reggae—I think it was the soundtrack to "The Harder They Come." Super Goat Man was more dressed up than he'd been in his room upstairs. He wore a felt brocade vest and striped pants. He danced in tiny little steps, as though losing and regaining his balance, his

arms loose at his sides, fingers snapping. Mostly he moved his head to the beat, shaking it back and forth as if saying no-no-no, no-no-no. He shook his head at my mother's dancing, as if he couldn't approve of the way she was moving but couldn't quit paying attention, either.

My father? He was seated on the rolled-up rug, his back against the mantelpiece, elbows on his knees, dangling with forefinger and thumb a nearly empty paper cup of red wine. Like me, he was watching my mom and Super Goat Man. It didn't look as if it bothered him at all.

My junior year at Corcoran College, in Corcoran, New Hampshire, Super Goat Man was brought in to fill the Walt Whitman Chair in the Humanities. This was 1981, the dawn of Reagan. The chair was required to teach one course; Super Goat Man's was listed in the catalogue as "Dissidence and Desire: Marginal Heroics in American Life, 1955-1975." The reading list included Franz Fanon, Roland Barthes, and Timothy Leary. It was typical of Corcoran that it would choose that particular moment to recuperate a figure associated with sixties protest, to enshrine what had once been at the vigorous center of the culture in the harmless pantheon of academia. It was Super Goat Man's first teaching job since the fifties. The commune on our street had shut down at some point in my high-school years, and I don't know where Super Goat Man had been in the intervening time. I certainly hadn't thought about him since departing for college.

He'd gained a little weight, but was otherwise unchanged. I first spotted him moving across the Commons lawn on a September afternoon, the scent of fallen and fermenting crab apples on the breeze. It was one of those rare, sweet days on either side of the long New Hampshire winter, when the school year was either falsely fresh before its plunge into bleak December or exhausted and ready to give way to summer. Super Goat Man wore a forest-green corduroy suit and a wide salmon tie, but his feet were still bare. A couple of Corcoran girls trailed alongside him. He had a book open as he walked—perhaps he was reading them a poem.

The college had assigned Super Goat Man a dormitory apartment—a suite of rooms built into Sweeney House, one of the student residences. That is to say, he lived on the edge of the vast Commons lawn, and we students felt his watchful presence much as I had on our street in Brooklyn. I didn't take Super Goat Man's class, which was full of freshmen and those renegade history and rhetoric majors who'd been seduced by French strains of philosophy and literary theory. I fancied myself a classics scholar then—though I'd soon divert into a major in history—and wasn't curious about contemporary political theory; nor did I believe Super Goat Man to be a superior teacher. I wasn't certain that he had nothing to offer the Corcoran students, but whatever he did have to offer it wasn't summed up by the title of his class.

I did, however, participate in one of the late-night salons in the living room of Sweeney House. Super Goat Man had begun appearing there casually, showing up after a few students had occupied the couches and lit a fire or opened a bottle of red wine. Increasingly, his presence was relied upon; soon he was the center of an unnamed tradition. Though Corcoran College was then in the midst of a wave of glamor-

ous eighties-style binge parties, and cocaine had begun to infiltrate our sanctum in the New Hampshire woods, the Sweeney House salons were a return to an earlier temperature of college socializing. Bearded art students who disdained dancing in favor of bull sessions, Woolfian-Plathian girls in long vintage dresses, and lonely gay virgins of both genders—these were the types who found their way to Sweeney to sit at Super Goat Man's feet. There were also, from what I observed, a handful of quiet superhero-comic-book fans who revered Super Goat Man in that capacity and were covertly basking in his aura, ashamed to ask the sorts of questions I'd peppered him with in his room in the communal house so long ago.

The evening I sat in, Super Goat Man had dragged his phonograph out from his apartment and set it up in the living room so that he could play Lenny Bruce records for his acolytes. He spoke intermittently, his voice unhurried and reflective, explaining the context of the famous comedian's arrests and courtroom battles before dropping the needle on a given track. After a while, conversation drifted to other subjects. Cross talk arose, though whenever Super Goat Man began to speak, in his undemonstrative way, all



"Mrs. Hammond! I'd know you anywhere from little Billy's portrait of you."

fell deferentially silent. Then Super Goat Man went into his apartment and brought out an Ornette Coleman LP.

"You know a bit about jazz, don't you, Everett?" It was the first time he'd addressed me directly. I hadn't known he'd recognized me.

"A thing or two, I guess."

"Everett's father was the one who turned me on to Rahsaan Roland Kirk," Super Goat Man told a teen-ager I recognized, a bespectacled sophomore who'd impressively talked his way into a classics seminar that was meant for upperclassmen. "I always thought that stuff was too gimmicky, but I'd never really listened."

I tried to imagine when Super Goat Man and my dad had spent so much

time together. It was almost impossible to picture, but Super Goat Man didn't have any reason to be lying about it. It was one of the first times I was forced to consider the possibility that my parents had social lives—that they had lives.

"Does your father write about jazz?" the sophomore asked me, wide-eyed. I suppose he'd misunderstood Super Goat Man's remark. There were plenty of famous—or at least interesting—fathers at Corcoran College, but mine wasn't one of them.

"My father works for New York State," I said. "Department of Housing and Urban Development. Well, he just lost his job, in fact."

"He's a good five-card-stud player,

too," said Super Goat Man. "Cleaned me out a few times, I don't mind saying."

"Oh, yeah, my dad's a real supervillain," I said with the heaviest sarcasm I could muster. I was embarrassed to think of my father sucking up to Super Goat Man, as he surely had during their long evenings together, whoever had taken the bulk of the chips.

Then the squeaky jazz began playing, and Super Goat Man, though seated in one of the dormitory's ratty armchairs, closed his eyes and began shaking his head as if transported back to the commune's dance floor, or perhaps to some even earlier time. I studied his face. The tufts around his ears and throat were graying. I puzzled over his actual age. Had Super Goat Man once spent decades frozen in a block of ice, like Captain America? If Ralph Gersten had been a college teacher in the fifties, he was probably older than my dad.

Eight months later, the campus was green again. The term was almost finished, all of us nearly freed to summer, when it happened: the incident at the Campanile. A Saturday, late in a balmy night of revels, the Commons lawn full of small groups crossing from dorm to dorm, cruising the parties that flared like bonfires in the landscape of the campus. Many of us still owed papers, others would have to sit in a final class the following Monday, but the mood was one of expulsive release from our labors. It was nearly three in the morning when Rudy Krugerrand and Seth Brummell, two of the wealthiest and most widely reviled frat boys at Corcoran, scaled the Campanile and began bellowing.

I was among those awake and near enough by to be drawn by the commotion into the small crowd at the dark base of the Campanile tower. When I first gazed up at Rudy and Seth, I was confused by what I saw: were there four figures spotlighted against the clock beneath the bells? And where were the campus authorities? It was as though this night had been officially ceded to some bacchanalian imperative.

That spring, a sculpture student had, as his thesis project, decorated the Commons with oversized office supplies—a stapler in the dimensions of a limou-



"Well, back to the old drawing board."

THOUGHT FOR A SUNSHINY MORNING

It costs me never a stab nor squirm
To tread by chance upon a worm.
“Aha, my little dear,” I say,
“Your clan will pay me back one day.”

—*Dorothy Parker*

sine, a log painted as a No. 2 pencil, and a pile of facsimile paper clips, each the height of a human being, fashioned out of plastic piping and silver paint. I suppose the work was derivative of Claes Oldenburg, but the result made an impressive spectacle. It was two of the paper-clip sculptures that Rudy Krugerrand and Seth Brummell had managed to attach to their belts like mannequin dance partners and drag with them out onto the ledge of the Campanile clock, where they stood now, six stories from the ground. Their faces uplit in the floodlights, Rudy and Seth were almost like players in the climax of some gothic silent-film drama, but they didn't have the poise or imagination to know it. They were only college pranksters, reeling drunk, Seth with a three-quarters-empty bottle of Jack Daniel's still in his hand, and at first it was hard to make out what they were shouting. We on the ground predictably shouted “Jump!” back at them, knowing that they loved themselves too dearly ever to consider it.

Then Rudy Krugerrand's slurred voice rose above the din—or perhaps it was only that I picked it out of the din for the first time. “Calling Super Goat Man! Calling Super Goat Man!” He shouted this until his voice broke hoarse. “This looks like a job for Super Goat Man! Come out, come out, wherever you are!”

“What's going on?” I asked a student beside me.

He shrugged. “I guess they're calling out Super Goat Man. They want to see if he can get them down from the ledge.”

“What do you mean?”

“They want to see him use his powers.”

From the clock tower, Seth Brummell screamed now, in a girlish falsetto,

“Oh, Super Goat Man, where are you?”

A stirring had begun in the crowd, which had grown to a hundred or more. A murmuring. Under the guise of concern for Rudy and Seth, but certainly with a shiver of voyeuristic anticipation, some had begun to speak of going to the Sweeney House apartment to see if Super Goat Man could be found. There was a hint of outrage: Why wasn't he here already? What kind of Super Goat Man was he, anyway?

Now a group of fifteen or twenty broke out and streamed down the hill toward Sweeney House. Others trailed after them, myself included. I hid in the crowd, feeling like an observer, though I suppose I was as complicit as anyone. Were we only curious, or part of a mob? It seemed, anyway, that we were under the direction of Rudy and Seth.

“That's right,” mocked Rudy. “Only Super Goat Man can save us now!”

Those who'd led the charge hammered on Super Goat Man's apartment door for a good few minutes before getting a result. Bold enough to have woken him, they inched backward at the sight of him on his threshold, dressed only in a flowery silk kimono, blinking groggily at the faces arrayed on the hill. Then someone stepped forward, took his arm, and pointed him toward the Campanile. Any conversation was drowned by the sound of sirens, as the campus police belatedly pulled up to the tower. Super Goat Man shook his head sorrowfully, but he began the trek up the hill toward the Campanile. We all fell in around and behind him, emboldened at marching to the beat of a superhero's step, feeling the pulse of the script that it now appeared would be played out, and ignoring the fact that it had been written by Rudy and Seth and Jack Daniel's. Super Goat Man's kimono flut-

tered slightly, not quite a cape. He tightened the sash, then strode, rubbing at his eyes with balled fists.

This success seemed only to enrage Rudy and Seth, who writhed and scorned from atop their perch. “Baaahh, baaahh, Super Goat Man!” they roared. “What's the matter with your goaty senses? Smoke too much dope tonight? Fuck you, Super Goat Man!” Seth lifted his giant paper clip above his head and shook it like a fake strongman's prop barbell.

The campus police had begun to herd the students away from the base of the tower, but our arriving throng pushed the opposite way. In the confusion, the young policemen seemed utterly helpless, and fell back. Straining on tiptoe to see over the heads of the crowd, I followed the progress of the lime-green kimono as Super Goat Man was thrust to the fore, not necessarily by his own efforts. Above, Seth was strumming air-guitar chords on his paper clip, then waggling it over our heads like an enormous phallus.

“Bite my crank, Super Goat Man!”

The crowd gasped as Super Goat Man shed his garb—for mobility, I suppose—and started shimmying, almost scampering, up the face of the tower. His pelt was glossy in the moonlight, but nobody could have mistaken the wide streak of white above his dusky buttocks for sheen. Super Goat Man was aging. He scurried through the leaf-blobby shade that a tree branch cast against the side of the tower, then back into the light. Whether it was the pressure of expectation on a still sleepy mind or possibly a genuine call to heroics, a hope that he could do some good here, Super Goat Man had taken the bait. His limbs worked miraculously as he ascended the tower, yet one could only dread what would happen if he reached the idiot boys at the top, who were growing more agitated and furious with every inch he achieved. Rudy had lifted his own paper clip, to match Seth, and now he swung it out over us.

The plummet silenced us. It was over before we could swallow our words and form a cry to replace them. Six stories is no distance at all. Rudy's paper clip had overbalanced him. Super Goat Man had braced three limbs, and reached out with a fourth—some of

[computer-generated cartoon content]



*"Caption: we work in an office; however, we have dressed for the circus.
What a humorous mixup."*

us saw, others only imagined afterward—but he didn't come away with Rudy. Super Goat Man caught the paper clip in mid-flight with the prehensile toes of his left foot, and the sculpture was jerked free from Rudy as he fell. That's how firm was Super Goat Man's hold on the tower's third story: it was left for later to speculate whether he might have been able to halt a human body's fall. Rudy came to earth, shattering at the feet of the policemen there at the tower's base. Now the nude furry figure could only undertake a sober, methodical descent, paper clip tucked beneath one arm. At the clockface, Seth Brummell was mute, clinging to a post, waiting for the security men who would soon unlock the small door in the tower behind him and angrily yank him to safety.

Rudy Krugerrand survived his fall. It cost him the use of his legs, cost him all feeling below some point at his middle. Only a junior, he rather courageously reappeared in a motorized wheelchair the following September, resumed his studies, resumed drinking, too, though his temperament had mellowed. He'd be seen at parties dozing in the corner after the dance floor had filled—it took very little beer to knock

his dwindled body out. If Rudy had died, or never returned, the incident likely would have been avidly discussed, etched into campus legend. Instead it was covered in a clumsy hush. The co-existence in the same small community of Rudy and Super Goat Man—who'd been offered a seat in the social sciences, and accepted—created a kind of odd, insoluble puzzle: Had the hero failed the crisis? Caused it, by some innate provocation? Or was the bogus crisis unworthy, and the outcome its own reward? Who'd shamed whom?

I contemplated this koan, or didn't, for just another year. My graduate studies took me to the University of California, Irvine, three thousand grateful miles from Corcoran. I didn't see Super Goat Man or think of him again for more than a decade.

The sweetest student I ever had was an Italian girl named Angela Verucci. Tall, bronze-skinned, with a quiz-zical, slightly humorless cast, dressed no matter the weather in neat pants suits or skirts with stockings, she wore heavy tortoiseshell eyeglasses and kept her blond hair knit in a tight, almost Japanese bun. She had an aura of seriousness and a Mediterranean lustre

that outshone to near-invisibility the blandly corn-fed and T-shirted students in whose midst she had materialized. Angela Verucci was not so much a girl, really: twenty-four years old, she'd studied at Oxford before winning the Reeves Fellowship that brought her to America. She spoke immaculate English, and though her accreditation was a mess, she was nearly as accomplished a medievalist as I was the day she appeared in my class. This was at Oregon State University, in Corvallis, where I'd been given a two-year postdoc after my six years at Irvine. Oregon State was the third stop in Angela Verucci's American tour—she'd spent a year at Columbia and, as it happened, a term at Corcoran.

What does a single thirty-year-old history professor do with the sweetest student he's ever had? He waits until the end of the semester, then he asks her out. We were married two years later.

I was at Rutgers by then, on a second postdoc, and hungry for a tenure-track position. My job interviews weren't exactly unsuccessful: I was never summarily dismissed. Instead I was always called back for second and third visits, always asked to teach a sample class. Afterward, polite notes flew back and forth, candidate and committee reassuring each other of how fine the experience had been, how glad we both were to have met. Only I never got a job.

By the time I got the invitation to interview for a position at Corcoran, the New England pastures of my alma mater didn't look like such a poor fate. It was the week of Halloween, the weather glorious, so at the very least the day of the interview would be a nice jaunt. We left early, to roam a few New Hampshire back roads, then ate a picnic lunch beside Corcoran Pond before I checked in for an afternoon of meetings.

Corcoran looked implacable, though I knew it was changed. The school had been through financial shakeups and tenure scandals that had, in turn, purged most of the administrators and faculty I'd known. But the grounds, the crab-apple trees and white clapboard, were as eternal as a country-store calendar. While Angela took a memory tour, heading for her old dorm, I showed up

for my scheduled tribunal. There I was debriefed by peers, a couple of them younger than myself. The room was full of the usual tensions: some of these people had an investment in my candidacy, some had bets on other tables. No one was in the least sentimental about my status as an alumnus—that was reserved, I supposed, for the dinner that night, arranged in my honor at the President's House. After a final round of polite handclasps, I was ferried to the president's office for a private meeting. I figured this was a good sign.

The president asked how I felt about the interview; we made this and other small talk. She asked about my years at Corcoran, which I painted in rosy tones. Then she said, "Did you know Super Goat Man when you were a student here?"

"Sure," I said. "I mean, I never took a class with him."

"He surprised me by asking to join us at the dinner tonight—he doesn't usually bother with faculty socializing anymore."

"He's still here?" I was amazed that Super Goat Man, of all people, had threaded his way through so many personnel shakeups.

"Yes, though he's reduced to a kind of honorary presence. He doesn't actually teach now. I don't know if he'd be capable of it. But he's beloved. The students joke that he can be spotted strolling across Commons lawn twice a semester. And that if you want to get any time with him you can join him on the stroll."

"He recognized my name?"

"He seemed to, yes. You should prepare yourself. He's quite infirm."

"How—how old is he?"

"Measured in years, I don't know. But there's been an accelerated aging process. You'll see."

Perhaps superheroism was a sort of toxin, like a steroid, one with a punitive cost to the body. I mused on this as I crossed the Commons and headed through the parking lot and downhill to find the bench beside Corcoran Creek, a favorite spot, where Angela had said she'd wait. I saw my wife before she saw me, her feet tucked up on the slats, abandoned shoes beneath, her body curled around a big hardback biography of Rousseau. In the distance,

dying October light drew long saddle-shaped curves on the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Suddenly, I could picture us here for a long time, and picture it happily.

"How did it go?" she asked when she noticed me.

"Par: two friends, two enemies, one sleeper."

"And the president?"

"Nice, but she wasn't giving anything away."

She closed the book. "You seem distant," she said. "Memories?"

"Yes." In fact, I was thinking about Super Goat Man. I'd never before considered the sacrifice he'd made by enunciating his political views so long ago. Fruitlessly, it seemed to me. What had he gained in exchange for his iconic, trapped-in-amber status? Had Super Goat Man really accomplished much outside the parameters of his comics? However unglamorous the chores, didn't kittens need rescuing from trees? Didn't Vest Man require periodic defeating? Why jettison Ralph Gersten if in the end all you attained was the life of a campus mascot?

I wanted to convey some of this to Angela, but didn't know where to begin. "When you were here," I

said, "did you know Super Goat Man?"

I saw her stiffen. "Of course. Everybody knew him," she said.

"He's still here." I watched her as I spoke. Her gaze dipped to the ground.

"You saw him?"

"No, but we will at dinner tonight."

"How . . . unexpected." Now Angela was the one in fugue.

"Did you study with him?"

"He rarely taught. I attended a few talks."

"I thought you didn't like that stuff."

She shrugged. "I was curious."

I waited to understand. Crickets had begun a chorus in the grass. Soon we'd need to visit our off-campus bed-and-breakfast, to change into fresh clothes for the dinner party. Ordinarily such gatherings were clumsy at best, with grudges incompletely smothered under the surface of the talk, among tenured faculty who knew one another far too well. Something in me now curdled at the prospect of this one. In fact, I'd begun to dread it.

"Everett." There was something Angela wanted to tell me.

I made a preemptive guess. "Did you have some sort of thing with Super Goat Man?" This was how she and I blundered through each other's past



KUPER

liaisons—we'd never been systematic.

"Just an—affair. Nothing."

"What's nothing?"

She shrugged, and flipped her fingers as though dispelling a small fog. "We fooled around a few times. It was stupid."

I felt the poison of bitterness leach into my bloodstream. "I don't know why, but I find that totally disgusting."

"Oh, Everett." Angela raised her arms, moved to assuage me, knowing as she did my visceral possessiveness, the bolt of jealousy that shot through me when contemplating her real past, anytime it arose. Of course she couldn't understand my special history with Super Goat Man. How could she if I didn't? I'd never even mentioned him.

"I was a silly girl." She spoke gently. "And I didn't know you yet."

Unsatisfied, I wished her to declare that the encounter had been abusive, an ethical violation. Not that I had any ground to stand on. Anyway, she was Italian in this, as in all things. It was just an affair.

"Do you want to skip the dinner?"

She scowled. "That's unnecessary. He wouldn't even remember. And I don't care. It's really nothing, my darling. My love."

At the president's house, Super Goat Man was the last to arrive, so I was allowed briefly to fantasize that I'd been spared. The sight, when he did come in, was startling. He'd not only aged but shrunk—I doubted if he was even five feet tall. He was, as ever, barefoot, and he wore white muslin pajamas with purple piping. The knees of the pajama bottoms were smudged with mud. As he entered the room, creeping in amid us as we stood with our cocktail glasses, I quickly saw the reason for the smudges: as Super Goat Man's rickety steps faltered, he dropped briefly to all fours. There, on the ground, he shook himself, like a wet dog. Then he rose again, on palsied limbs.

No one took notice of this. The guests, the other faculty, were inured, polite. In this halting manner, Super Goat Man made his way past us to the dining room. Apparently he wasn't capable of mingling, or even necessarily of speech. He took a seat at the long table, his bunched face, his squinting eyes and wrinkled horns, nearly at the level of his place

setting. We began drifting in behind him, almost guiltily. The president's husband showed us to our places, which had been carefully designated, though an accommodation was evidently being made for Super Goat Man, who'd plopped down where he liked and wasn't to be budged. I was at the right hand of the president, and the left of the chair of the hiring committee. Another good sign. Angela sat across from me, Super Goat Man many places away, at the other end of the table.

I actually managed to forget him for the duration of the meal. He was, so far as I could tell, silent at his feed, and the women on either side of him turned to their other partners or conversed across the width of the table. Toward the end, we were served Cognac and dessert, and the president's husband passed around cigars, which he bragged were Cuban. Some of the women fled their chairs to avoid the smoke; other guests rose and mingled in the corners of the room. It was in this interval of disarrangement that Super Goat Man pushed himself off his chair and made his way to the seat at my left, which the president had vacated. He had to collapse to his knees only once on the way, and he offered no evidence of sacrificed dignity as he rose from the floor.

Angela remained in her seat. Unlike any of the American women, she'd accepted a cigar, and now leaned it into the flame of a lighter proffered by an older professor she'd been entertaining throughout the meal. Her eyes found mine as Super Goat Man approached. Her expression was curious, and not unsympathetic.

Super Goat Man prodded my arm with a finger. I turned and considered him. Black pupils gleamed behind a hedge of eyebrows. His resplendent tufts had thinned and spread—the hair of his face had been redistributed, to form a merciful gauze across his withered features.

"I . . . knew . . . your . . . father." His voice was mossy, sepulchral.

"Yes," I said simply, keeping my voice low. No one was paying any attention to us, yet, apart from Angela.

"You . . . remember . . . ?"

"Of course."

"We . . . love . . . jazz . . ."

I wondered whether he meant my

father or, somehow, me. I had in fact over the years come around to my father's love of jazz, though my preference was not so much Ornette Coleman and Rahsaan Roland Kirk as Duke Ellington and Fletcher Henderson.

" . . . poker . . ."

"He cleaned you out," I reminded him.

"Yezz . . . good times . . . beautiful women . . ." He struggled, swallowed hard, blinked. "All this controversy . . . not worth it . . ."

"My father was never involved in any controversy," I heard myself say, though I knew Super Goat Man was speaking only of himself, his lost career.

"No . . . absolutely true . . . knew how to live . . ."

Angela had leaned back, pursing her lips to savor the cigar. I might have noticed that the room's gabble of conversation had dampened somewhat—might have noticed sooner, I mean.

"So . . . many . . . hangovers . . ."

"But you and I have something in common besides my father," I told Super Goat Man.

"Yezz . . . yezz . . . ?"

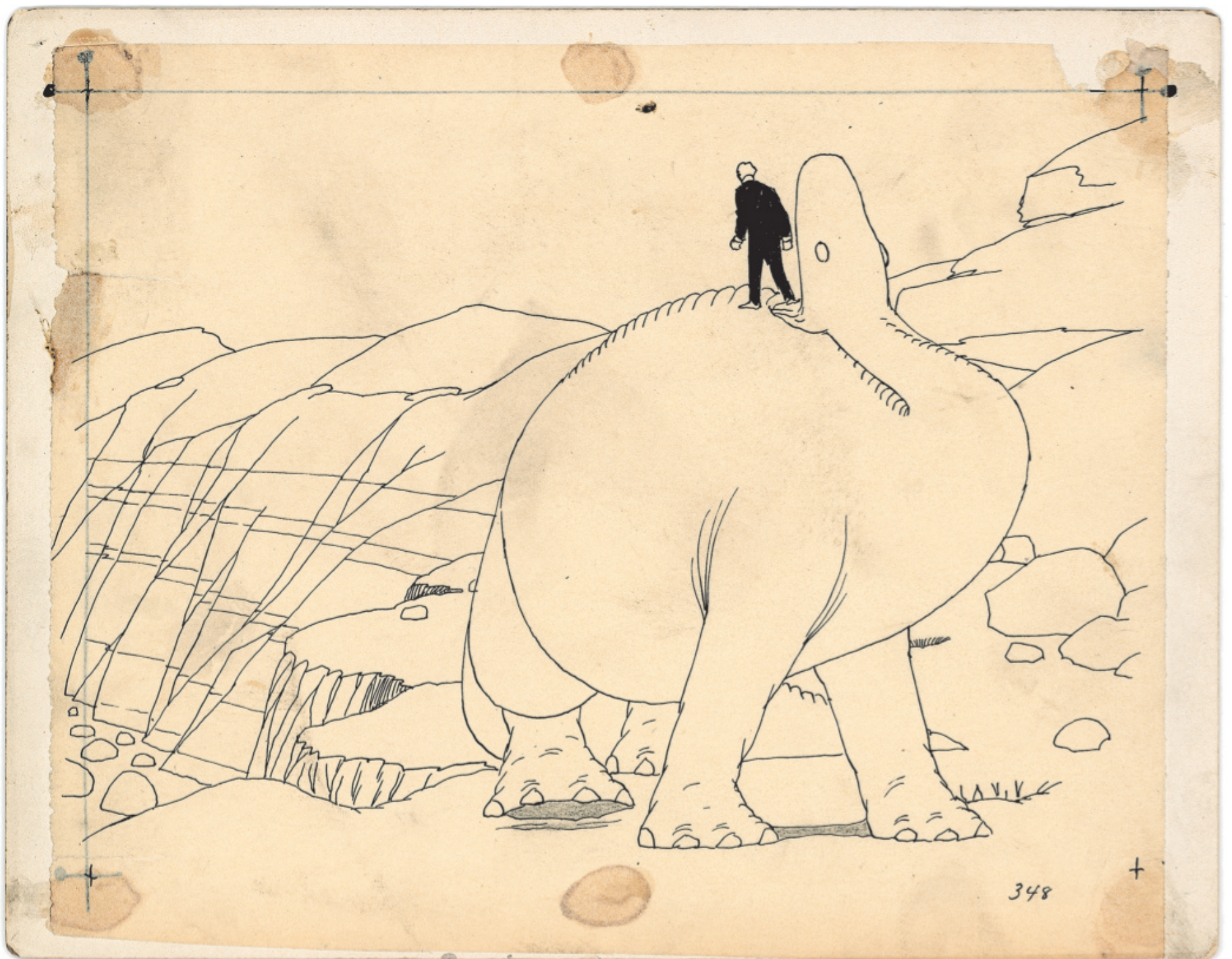
"Of course we do," I began, and though I now understood that we had the attention of the entire room, that the novelty of Super Goat Man's reminiscences had drawn every ear, I found myself unable to quit before I finished the thought. Further, having gained their attention, I allowed my voice to rise to a garrulous, plummy tone, as if I were starring in dinner theatre. Before the line was half out of my mouth, I knew that the words, by airing the sort of laundry so desperately repressed in a community as precious as Corcoran, damned my candidacy. But that was a prize I no longer sought. Broader repercussions I could only guess at. My wife's eyes were on me now, her cigar's blunt tip flaring. I'd answer to her later, if she gave me the chance.

It was the worst thing I could think to say. The impulse had formed in the grip of sexual jealousy, of course. But before it crossed my lips I knew that my loathing had its origins in an even deeper place, in the mind of a child wondering at his father's own susceptibility to the notion of a hero.

What I said was this: "I once saw you rescue a paper clip." ♦

THE CRITICS

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ANNALS OF ANIMATION

DRAW STARS

The surprise and wonder of early animated films.

BY RICHARD BRODY

Animated features have been big business since Walt Disney's 1937 film "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" was that year's top-grossing release. With the rise of digital animation in this century, the medium's financial clout has grown even greater. In the past decade, at least nine animated films (headed by this year's hyperrealistic version of "The Lion King") have brought

in more than a billion dollars each at the worldwide box office. Digital effects give animators vast powers to create extravagant fantasies; anything seems possible. Yet, with so much money at stake, the infinite capacities of the medium are often put to use for a narrow range of market-tested formulas.

To rediscover the spontaneity, the free-flowing imagination, and the un-

inhibited sense of fun at the heart of the medium, go back to its beginnings. Leapfrog over the age of computer-generated imagery and even the golden age of hand-drawn cartoons featuring Bugs Bunny, Betty Boop, and Mickey Mouse, and delve into the masterworks of the earliest years of animation. During the silent-film era, bold individualists tested the extremes of techniques that they

Winsor McCay drew himself on the back of the title character in his short film "Gertie the Dinosaur," released in 1914.

may also have invented. Many of these silent cartoons are more than mere historical curiosities—they're giddy delights that stand alongside such classic silent live-action comedies as those by Mack Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton. What's more, quite a few of these films—which are in the public domain, their copyrights long expired—are hiding in plain view, for free, on YouTube and other sites (and are easily searchable by their directors and titles).

Yet a cell phone or a laptop computer only hints at the shock that Émile Cohl's "Fantasmagorie," from 1908, one of the first hand-drawn animated films, offered on the big screen. It opens with an extreme closeup of the artist's hand leaping onto a black screen and rapidly drawing—a vision of artistry that heralded the power of the medium. Next, we see a clown dangling from a crossbar, and then, for two minutes, exquisitely controlled chaos reigns. A sprouting plant lifts off the clown's head and delivers it to another man while the headless clown does gymnastics. A champagne bottle becomes a flower, which becomes an elephant's trunk. Cohl's hallucinatory shape-shifting was a thunderclap, revealing that animation could be used as more than just a curiosity. He inspired other caricaturists and comic-strip artists to follow him into the freewheeling realm of animation.

Together, they forged a cinema of discovery, surprise, and wonder.

Just as live-action films surpassed their roots in photography and theatre, animated films—borrowing from comic strips, magic shows, and vaudeville—took flight and became a distinctive and mysterious kind of aesthetic experience. But their creators quickly discovered a particular obstacle to this aesthetic flowering: how hard the films were to make. Early live-action shorts, such as Sennett's and Chaplin's, could be filmed rapidly, even in a single day, with casual or nonexistent scripts. Each minute of an animated film, on the other hand, required at least nine hundred and sixty precisely sequenced drawings. And the finished movies, despite how labor-intensive they were, looked simple: line drawings on spare backgrounds.

Early animators responded to this problem by choosing to display the exacting process itself. Cohl filmed his hand as he made the drawings of "Fantasmagorie." The illustrator Winsor McCay went even further with his first film, "Little Nemo," which was an extension of his celebrated comic strip "Little Nemo in Slumberland." The film is mainly live action, a faux documentary that shows McCay meeting friends and accepting a gentlemanly challenge to make, within a month, four thousand drawings and set them in motion. He sweats under the pressure, enduring several mishaps. Near

the film's end, he starts up a projector and a drawing fills the screen under the rubric "WATCH ME MOVE." The animation is rudimentary but expressive: McCay's famous characters—some of which are racist caricatures—begin to run and dance, stretch and shrink, as if in distorting mirrors, displaying both the realistic power of animation and its easy swing into fantasy.

McCay's third film, "Gertie the Dinosaur," introduced what became a beloved character, likely the first to be born in an animated film. Gertie, a lumbering and amiable beast, emerges from a cave. McCay renders her delicately, taking pains to have the small wrinkles of her body undulate with her breathing. The animator "talks" with Gertie in the title cards and, like a circus trainer, commands her to raise one foot and then another—and even draws himself as a tiny character entering the prehistoric landscape with her. The movie's most inspired moment emerges from its severest limitation: the sparsely detailed background. When Gertie grabs a woolly mammoth by the tail and flings it into a lake, McCay exploits that blank space and shrinks the mammoth to minuscule size as it vanishes comically far into the distance.

The first generation of animators often conjured up fictitious interactions with their hand-drawn characters. None did so more boldly than the brothers Max and Dave Fleischer—best known as the creators, in the sound era, of the "Popeye" and "Betty Boop" series—who thrilled to the vertiginous comedy of animated characters turning the tables on their creators. Their silent "Out of the Inkwell" shorts are delirious metafiction that show Max at work in his office, drawing a small clown who finds ways to escape the sheet of paper and make mischief in the outside world. In "The Tantalizing Fly," the clown borrows Max's fountain pen to clobber a fly, swings the pen, and scatters ink off the page—and onto Max's face. "Bubbles" shows Max and the clown competing to blow the biggest soap bubble. The clown defies his creator by making a bubble in which he floats off the page, out the window, into the street, and down the radiator of a stranger's car. In "Jumping Beans," the clown makes a rubber stamp in his own likeness, cloning himself and overrunning the office



with an army of clowns, who lasso Max and wrestle him to the floor.

The early spirit of experimentation in animation didn't last long. In 1914, the producer J. R. Bray and the animator Earl Hurd began patenting the process known as cel animation, which was a crucial step in the industrialization of the art form. Bray also set up a studio to produce cartoons quickly, for wide distribution. "How Animated Cartoons Are Made," from 1919, directed by Wallace Carlson, demonstrates the way this commercialization curtailed the animator's freedom. Carlson appears onscreen, explaining (in a title card), "The first thing to do is to get an O.K. on the scenario"; he then knocks on a door labelled "J. R. BRAY." Later, we are shown a title card that reads, "After the film is developed and printed, the cartoon is projected for criticism." Bray appears onscreen, ordering Carlson to make a change to one scene.

Carlson concludes the self-deprecating comedy with barely concealed exasperation: a title card reading, "Just as soon as we correct that 'run' and do the other sixty-two scenes, we'll be glad to have you see the picture." The sadness that tinges this gag is brought to the fore by the charm and verve on display in "He Resolves Not to Smoke," a cartoon that Carlson made four years earlier for the Essanay studio, where Chaplin also worked at the time.

It's a sweet-toned anecdote, about a street-smart boy named Dud and his dog, that's spiced with a slangy pugnacity. The dog does tricks that are depicted with a mischievous joy—walking on its front legs and standing on its head. Dud's mustachioed father sits in an armchair, savoring his solitude with a similar gestural glee: he puffs on a pipe, flips his slipper into the air and back onto his foot, blows smoke rings and inhales them—and then dozes off. Peering into the window, Dud decides to pilfer the pipe. When he's tempted to smoke it, the comedy meshes homespun morals with cosmic leaps of fancy. Puffs of smoke form visions, both alluring and menacing, until the diabolical "spirit of smoke" vows to teach Dud a lesson—and lifts him from the ground, through the clouds, to the moon, while the dog cries and literally floods the street with its tears.

Perhaps the most revelatory career in early animation was that of Gregory



CROSSED PATHS

Thurber Meets Rembrandt

La Cava, who started as a newspaper cartoonist and—before he moved over to live-action films—directed dozens of animated shorts. One of them foreshadows La Cava's grand achievements as a director of feature films. (His most acclaimed works are the screwball comedy "My Man Godfrey" and the comedic drama "Stage Door.") The title of that cartoon, "The Breath of a Nation," winks at D. W. Griffith's grotesquely racist drama, but it's actually a comedy about Prohibition, released in 1919.

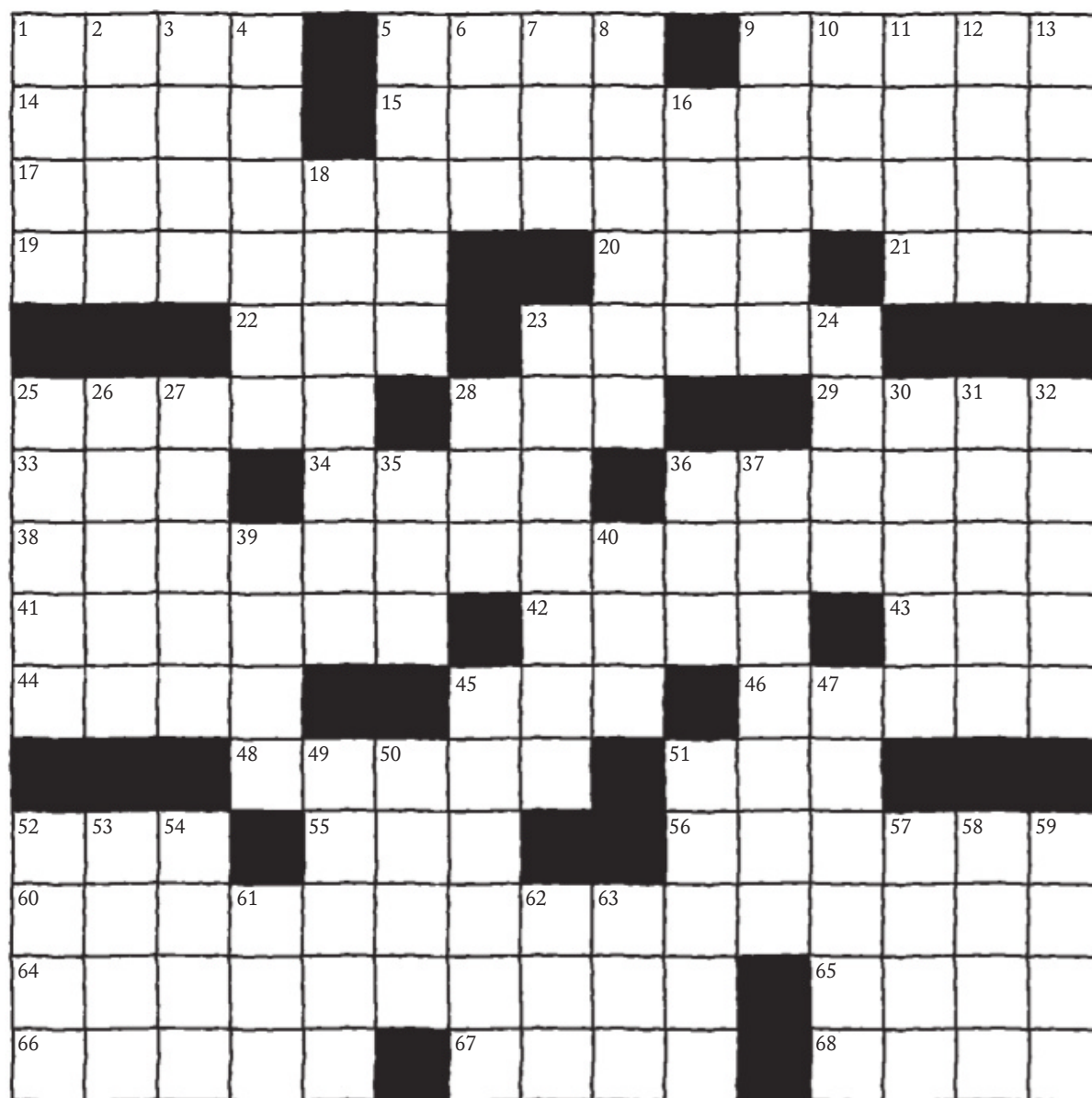
In "Breath," La Cava unfurls a whirligig profusion of clever twists and tricks. The film is part of a series of cartoons featuring the roundheaded Judge Rummy and his friend Silk Hat Harry. The premise takes on the stereotype of the henpecked husband, yet the tale makes it clear that the judge is in need of some serious pecking. As Rummy's domineering wife is dragging him to a temperance meeting—where he'll serve as "the horrible example"—he sneaks off to Harry's soda fountain, which is a front for a speakeasy. Though the comedy is as readily suited to live action, La Cava's animation inflects the film's basic situations with delightful impossibilities, as when a crowd of bibulous patrons suddenly materializes behind, beside, and

beneath a broad-shouldered barroom customer; a cantankerous drunkard ties a lamppost into a knot, sending the terrified Rummy scurrying horizontally up a wall; and Harry, under the withering gaze of Rummy's wife, shrinks into his hat. The characterizations and gags in this film set the template for the coming generations of cartoon comedy.

Much of early animation has been lost, such as the pioneering films of Helena Smith Dayton. But the surviving animation of the silent era offers a wide range of pleasures, including clay animation, which is showcased in the Chinese-American artist Joseph Sunn's "Green Pastures," and which Wallace McCutcheon merged with live action in "The Sculptor's Nightmare"; the lyrical stop-motion with dolls in "Mary & Gretel," by Howard S. Moss; the geometrical abstractions of Walter Ruttmann's "Opus 1"; and the intricate and interactive silhouettes in Lotte Reiniger's "Cinderella" and the rowdily antic ones of Bryant Fryer's "Follow the Swallow." These, too, and many others in the genre, are freely available online, waiting to inspire anew. They stand as a forgotten canon of expanded imagination, from a time like the present one in animation, when anything seems possible. ♦

CARTOON CROSSWORD

Crossword puzzles and cartoons are natural bedfellows: both trade in wit and wordplay, and both can elicit those gratifying “Aha!” moments when the answer, or the joke, finally crystallizes. In this crossword, eight of the clues are *New Yorker* cartoons; the answers are their captions. Turn on your pun detectors, marshal your best one-liners, and enjoy. (You can find the answers on newyorker.com.)



ACROSS

- 1 Hairdo
- 5 Big ____ (Silicon Valley giants)
- 9 Slow and stately, on musical scores
- 14 As well
- 15 (See cartoon)
- 17 (See cartoon)
- 19 (See cartoon)
- 20 LeWitt known for his wall drawings
- 21 Super Bowl highlights, for short
- 22 Word that may or may not contain an apostrophe
- 23 Apparent
- 25 “Saved by the Bell” character Jessie
- 28 Is for you?
- 29 Indian city home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites
- 33 Feel terrible
- 34 Junction point
- 36 Practice session
- 38 (See cartoon)
- 41 Deposit in the earth
- 42 Search carefully
- 43 Stanford rival, familiarly
- 44 “You’re gonna need a bigger ____” (iconic movie line)
- 45 Sloppy Joe necessity
- 46 Lengthy clerical vestment
- 48 Implicitly understood
- 51 (See cartoon)

- 52 West famous for double entendres
- 55 Bankroll
- 56 In the recent past
- 60 (See cartoon)
- 64 (See cartoon)
- 65 Trio in a yard
- 66 Something to act upon
- 67 Do in
- 68 Poet St. Vincent Millay

DOWN

- 1 Eatery that might have Wi-Fi
- 2 Procter & Gamble beauty brand
- 3 Tropical vacation destination
- 4 *Mad* magazine feature inspired by *Playboy*
- 5 Transfers to the fridge, perhaps
- 6 Cartoonish cry
- 7 Beret-clad figure depicted wearing a Bart Simpson T-shirt, in a *New Yorker* cartoon
- 8 Pain in the neck
- 9 Muhammad’s daughter
- 10 Casino convenience
- 11 Take five
- 12 Pleased
- 13 Ford contemporary
- 16 Bizarre family home in a nursery rhyme
- 18 “Hollywood” vis-à-vis the American film industry, e.g.
- 23 Military trim?

- 24 Rapper and reality-TV star whose real name is William Norwood, Jr.
- 25 British India title
- 26 Hard-to-move instrument
- 27 Dominant pack member
- 28 Commotion
- 30 El ____ (Cretan-born painter)
- 31 In the sticks
- 32 ____ monitor (house-arrest accoutrement)
- 35 Jersey number for a goalie
- 36 Honorific for Pierre Pérignon
- 37 Has an influence (on)
- 39 Get the ball rolling?
- 40 Thither
- 45 Rare fixtures in U.S. bathrooms
- 47 (See cartoon)
- 49 Suffering from insomnia, maybe
- 50 Give a hoot
- 51 Unlike a rolling stone
- 52 Newsstand purchases, briefly
- 53 Quite often
- 54 “____ Enchanted” (Newbery Honor book)
- 57 Like some wine and cheese
- 58 “If” follower, in computing
- 59 Grammy-winning James
- 61 Chinese-zodiac animal of 2019
- 62 Org. whose newest member is the Golden Knights
- 63 Aunt in Andalusia

15A



17A



19A



38A



47D



51A



60A

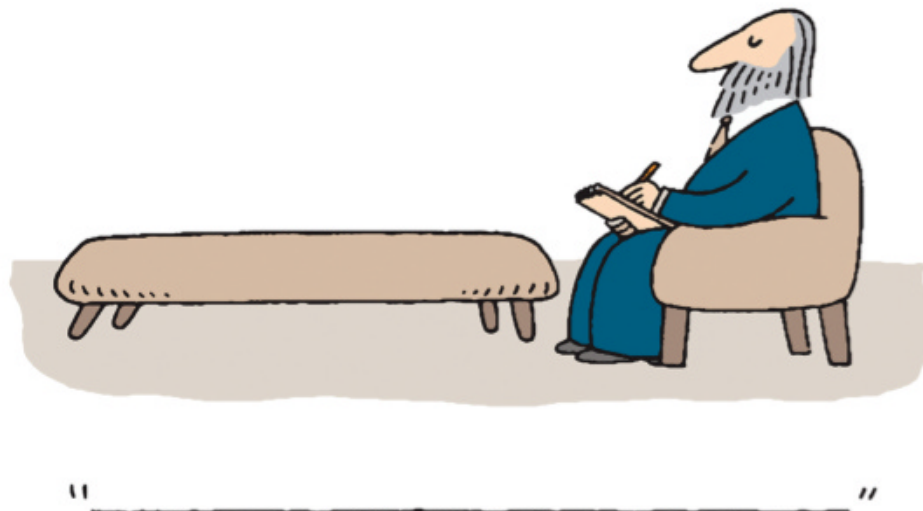


64A



MAKE YOUR OWN CARTOON

Below, courtesy of the late cartoonist Charles Barsotti, please find all the components necessary to build an original gag cartoon. Cut out one or more of the figures, arrange them as you see fit, and write a caption. Then share the results online, with the hashtag #DIYNewYorker.



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